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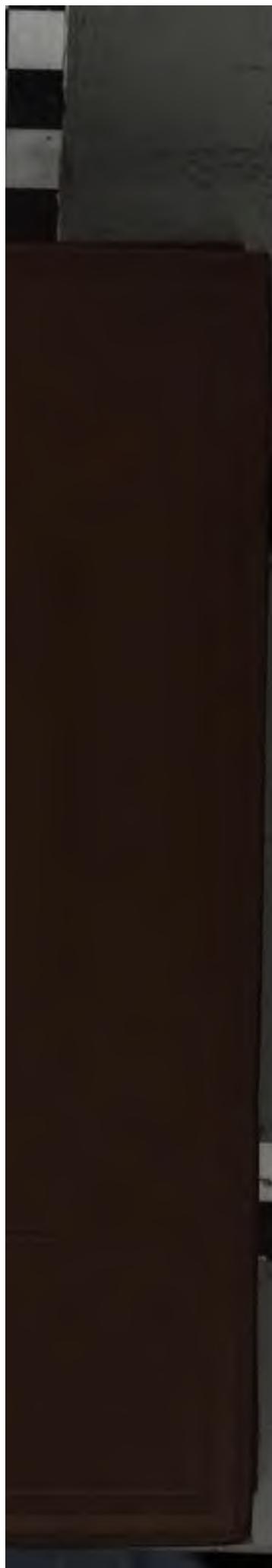
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#2

# FUTURE RETRIBUTION

Viewed in the Light of Reason and Revelation

*Joseph*  
By C. A. ROW M.A.

*Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral*

AUTHOR OF THE BAMPTON LECTURES ON "CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES  
VIEWED IN RELATION TO MODERN THOUGHT"

"THE JESUS OF THE EVANGELISTS" "REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN CHRISTIANITY"  
ETC.

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E-7

NEW YORK  
THOMAS WHITTAKER  
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1888

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1888

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# FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE REASONS WHICH, IN THE PRESENT ASPECTS OF THOUGHT, RENDER NECESSARY A CAREFUL INQUIRY INTO THE TRUTH OF THE COMMONLY ACCEPTED THEORIES RESPECTING FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

IT is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of the following questions :—

1. Shall we continue to exist, as personal conscious beings, capable of happiness or misery, after the death of our bodies ; or will death be a sleep from which there will be no awakening ?
2. Assuming that we shall continue thus to exist, what are the conditions on which our happiness or misery will depend in the unseen world ?

To these questions, so profoundly interesting to each one of us as individuals, Christianity returns two answers, definite and distinct—

1. That we shall thus continue to exist.
2. That our conduct here will exert an influence unspeakably important on our condition beyond the grave.

So much is clear respecting the teaching of Christianity ; yet there is no difficulty which, at the present day, presses so heavily on the minds of thoughtful men as the various doctrines respecting a future state of retribution, which a vast majority of those sections into which the Christian Church is divided, affirm to be its teaching on this subject. Although

the grounds on which these doctrines are alleged to rest differ widely from one another, the general conclusion which is deduced from them is for all practical purposes the same, viz. that Christianity affirms that the overwhelming majority of that innumerable multitude of men who have existed in the past and who exist in the present, will after this life is ended pass into a state of endless existence in never-ending misery ; for this is the meaning which is popularly attached to the word "damnation." The idea that a single individual will continue to exist in a state of torment, which will never terminate nor be relieved by a single ray of hope, is sufficiently awful ; but when this fate is assigned to that innumerable multitude which, according to these theories, will constitute the lost, words fail to express its awfulness. If it is true that Christianity affirms this, we may almost say, in the words in which our Lord denounced the sin of Judas, "Good were it for mankind if they had never been born."

I need hardly say that to the non-Christian such a doctrine constitutes the greatest of stumbling-blocks ; that to the professed unbeliever it constitutes one of the strong-holds from which he attacks Christianity ; that to the thoughtful inquirer after truth it appears to ascribe to God a character which the conscience he has implanted in man pronounces to be unholy ; and that the professed believer in it for the most part evades its difficulty, either by refusing to meditate on its awful import, or else by inventing some way of evading its application to himself or to those near and dear to him. Whatever may have been the case in the past, so strongly is this difficulty now felt that we seldom hear the doctrine of everlasting damnation proclaimed from the pulpit, and when it is referred to, it is usually in a very mild form compared with the awful reality which it involves. Yet surely, if the affirmations on this subject which are

popularly attributed to Christianity are true, and if it affords any means of escaping from this awful fate, humanity itself suggests that this doctrine should be proclaimed on the housetops, as a warning to the wicked and the careless ; nay, more, it ought to have been written plainly, definitely, and in a manner beyond the possibility of mistake, in the pages of the New Testament, if such was the belief of its various writers.

The awfulness of the popularly accepted doctrines is so great, and the obstacles which they are interposing to the acceptance of Christianity are of so serious a character, that it is become a matter of the highest importance in the present aspects of thought to inquire whether they are rightly attributed to the Christian revelation. Before entering on this inquiry, however, it will be necessary to enumerate and describe the chief theories on this subject which have attained a wide acceptance among large sections of the Christian Church.

#### I.—THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

The first of these theories in point of importance is that which is laid down in the Athanasian Creed. I say in point of importance, because it has been accepted as a correct statement of Christian truth by the entire Western Church. It affirms—

1. “That whosoever will, *i.e.* willeth to, be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith, which faith, except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlasting. And the Catholic faith is this.”

The writer then proceeds to set forth the true Catholic faith respecting the Trinity in twenty-five versicles, which contain no less than seventy-two propositions respecting the ontology of Deity. He concludes this portion of his subject in the

following words: "He therefore that will, *i.e.* willeth to, be saved, must thus think of the Trinity."

To this is added a second condition of salvation—

"Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This right faith is then defined in eight versicles which contain twenty propositions respecting the ontology of the Incarnation. Adding, then, these two sets of definitions together, the Creed propounds no less than ninety-two propositions of a highly abstract character respecting the ontology of Deity and the Incarnation, as the Catholic faith, which except a man keep whole and undefiled, he will without doubt perish everlasting.

The concluding portion of the Creed introduces a moral element into this subject. Speaking of Christ as judge of quick and dead, it adds—

"At whose coming, all men shall rise again with their bodies, and give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire."

It then concludes as follows—

"This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

In considering the affirmations of this creed it is necessary that the reader's attention should be drawn to a fact which is generally overlooked, that it nowhere defines what is the meaning intended by "perishing everlasting," or "going into everlasting fire." For anything which it affirms to the contrary, these expressions may mean annihilation; and so far they are consistent with the theory called "conditional immortality," or "life in Christ." But it is no less certain that the meaning which is attached to them by the overwhelming majority of those who read them or

hear them recited, is "endless existence in never-ending torment."

Only a few brief remarks on this portion of the subject will be necessary.

The earlier portion of the creed makes salvation dependent on a strict orthodoxy of belief in a large number of highly abstract propositions respecting the ontology of Deity and the Incarnation. But the intellectual powers of the overwhelming majority of mankind are of so inferior a character as to render them utterly incompetent judges of the truth or falsehood of propositions of this description, or even of forming a definite conception of their meaning. Yet without making any exception in favour of those, the inferiority of whose intellectual powers disables them from forming a judgment on such abstractions, or even taking into account the vast variety of mental endowments which different men possess, the language of the creed in its natural meaning, and without reading anything into it between its lines, affirms that all who do not hold "the Catholic faith," as therein defined, "whole and undefiled, shall without doubt perish everlasting." The conditions of salvation, then, according to the creed are an orthodox faith respecting the ontology of the Godhead and the Incarnation, to which it adds the further condition of a holy life.

It is true that numerous theologians have affirmed that we must read into this creed numerous qualifications which greatly mitigate its harshness. One of the last of these is that what are called its dammatory clauses are to be understood as only applicable to those who, with full knowledge and ample means of forming a judgment, reject the doctrines as therein propounded.\* Subject to this qualification, the

\* It has even been proposed to place before it a rubric affirming that it is in this sense that the so-called "dammatory or warning clauses" are accepted by the Church of England.

number of those who reject it will be few, if any. But of this and other qualifications of its natural meaning, the creed itself contains no hint.

## II.—THE CREEDS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Respecting these my remarks may be brief. It will be sufficient to observe that they embrace dogmatic affirmations on very numerous complicated positions in theology, with the modern addition of a belief in the immaculate conception of the Virgin, and of the infallibility of the Pope; and that they declare those who are unable to accept the whole range of dogmas contained in the creeds and confessions of this Church to be outcasts from the kingdom of heaven. In a word, no small number of their dogmas stand out in contradiction to the entire range of modern thought.

## III.—THE PREDESTINARIAN THEORY.

This theory is commonly, but incorrectly, designated Calvinism; I say “incorrectly,” because its fundamental principles were propounded in a systematic form ages before Calvin, by St. Augustine; but it should be observed that in its later forms it has undergone considerable modifications. Its importance arises from the fact that it underlies the confessions of faith of nearly all the Churches which sprung out of the Reformation, and is still retained in those of most of the Churches which are descended from them. The principles which underlie the original theory, and its various subsequent modifications, may be briefly stated thus—

According to it, God in his secret counsels before the foundation of the world, for the purpose of manifesting his glory, has elected a comparatively small number of mankind to everlasting life and felicity, and has left the remainder in that condition of ruin which, according to this theory, was occasioned by the

fall ; or, according to its more logical form, has predestined them to everlasting damnation. This election and reprobation are the result of what is euphemistically called "God's good pleasure," but more correctly His arbitrary will ; for, according to this theory, the choice is made irrespective of all moral considerations in the elect. In carrying out this purpose He created the first human pair, and so constituted things, that in the event of their transgressing a particular command they would not only incur the penalty of everlasting damnation, *i.e.* everlasting life in never-ending misery, but all their descendants, though they had no part in their guilt, would participate in their ruin. They fell ; and in consequence of their fall the entire human race, even infants who have died before they have had the opportunity of committing actual sin, have become the subjects of God's wrath and damnation. Such being man's ruined state by nature, it pleased God, for the purpose of manifesting the glory of His grace, to choose certain individuals, who, irrespective of any good thing in them or done by them, should be rescued from this state of ruin, and brought to everlasting salvation ; and, for the manifestation of His justice, either to predestine the remainder to everlasting damnation, or to pass them by and leave them in the state of ruin in which they were involved by the fall. To realise this purpose of saving the elect the Incarnation was effected, and, in conformity with a covenant entered into between the Father and the Son in the secret counsels of the Godhead, they were given to the latter to redeem. This the Son undertook to accomplish by satisfying the demands of the Father's justice for their sins, original and actual. This he effected by offering Himself a sacrifice to the Father, in doing which He drank out to the dregs the cup of Divine indignation, which, but for his interposition, must have been exhausted by the elect. Here we encounter two views : one which affirms that Christ

died for the sins of the elect only ; the other, that he suffered the penalty due for the sins of the whole world, but that the non-elect, inasmuch as they have never received what is designated "an effectual calling," receive no benefit from His atoning work, which, on the contrary, rather tends to aggravate their ruin. Into the consideration of the various opinions as to the mode in which the final salvation of the elect will be secured we need not enter.

Let it be observed, that the view which represents God as having consigned the non-elect to everlasting perdition by a direct decree, and that which affirms that He has simply passed them over and left them exposed to all the consequences of the broken Adamic covenant, involve a distinction without a difference. This is obvious, for if none but the elect will be saved and if the non-elect will be lost, it matters little whether their everlasting ruin has been the result of a direct Divine decree, or of their having been left exposed to the consequences of the fall. The result is the same in either case, for according to the theory their terrible fate is due not to their own sin but to a transgression in which they had no share, and nothing which they can do is capable of rescuing them from it. The latter view has been propounded simply to avoid the direct affirmation that God has created a large portion of mankind for the purpose of glorifying what is strangely called "His justice," by directly consigning them to everlasting ruin. Such, stripped of all disguises, is the predestinarian theory.

#### IV.—THE BAPTISMAL THEORY.

This theory has been, and is even now, held by numerous sections of the Church. As far as the consequences of the fall are concerned, between it and the predestinarian theory there is no essential difference ; for they both concur in affirming that all men are by nature children of wrath, from

the consequences of which no effort of their own can deliver them. But from this fearful condition the theory which we are now considering provides a partial deliverance in the sacrament of baptism, which, if administered *rightly*,\* conveys remission of original sin, *i.e.* of all the consequences entailed on man by the fall, of all actual sins if repented of, and the additional benefit of "spiritual regeneration." To this last word various meanings are attached ; it may mean more, but it never means less, than a transference from the kingdom of the evil one into the kingdom of God, in which are such means of grace that it is a man's own fault if he fails to attain to everlasting salvation.

This theory is evidently a great improvement on the one we have just considered ; but it leaves the unbaptised, *i.e.* the overwhelming majority of mankind, exposed to all the consequences of a sin in which they had no part, and of their actual transgressions. Carried out to its legitimate consequences, it consigns all unbaptised infants, though they have died before it was possible for them to commit an actual sin, just as the predestinarian theory consigns those who are non-elect, to everlasting damnation. From this result even the moral sense of Augustine, who first reduced these theories to a systematic form, recoiled. He therefore provided for infants a milder hell, designated the "limbo infantum," yet still a most unpleasant condition to live in everlastingly. Others have endeavoured to hide from themselves the terrible consequences of this theory, by consigning the unbaptised to what they designate "the uncovenanted mercies of God," which words, whatever they may be supposed to imply, mean something very

\* There are various theories as to what right administration consists in, some holding it to be valid if administered by a layman, a woman, or a heretic, while others affirm that it is essential to the validity, both of this and the other sacrament, that it should be administered by one who possesses what is designated **Apostolical Succession**.

different from the mercies of the Gospel. So obvious is the inference from this theory that even unbaptised infants may be the just subjects of God's wrath and damnation, that the compilers of the baptismal service of the Church of England have deemed it necessary to add to it a rubric which affirms that "it is certain, from God's word, that children who are baptised, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved." The natural inference from such words is, that there is no certainty of the salvation of those who die unbaptised, or, in other words, that it is consistent with the Divine character to leave such exposed to the condemnation which is affirmed to be due to every one who is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam, although they have had no part in Adam's transgression or in the production of those evil results in themselves with which it has been attended.

#### V.—THE SECTARIAN THEORIES.

Similar results follow from the theories propounded by those sects which affirm that there is no salvation outside their communion, and that they are in exclusive possession of the means of grace. The logical result of such theories is to consign the overwhelming majority of mankind either to everlasting damnation or to what are designated the uncovenanted mercies of God.

#### VI.—THE POPULAR THEORIES.

Popular belief varies considerably respecting the conditions which will admit one man to heaven and consign another to hell, and for the most part is indeterminate and vague. The following opinions are the most important:—

1. That it is necessary for the attainment of salvation to pass through certain religious experiences, which are designated "conversion;" and that those who die in an uncon-

verted state, having no share in the mercies of the Gospel, will be consigned to that place which is popularly understood by hell. What constitutes conversion is variously defined, according to the views which are entertained by different sects respecting its nature, but they for the most part agree in affirming that it is some action of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man, which is capable of being perceived by the consciousness of the individual. In one opinion, however, they all concur, that the unconverted will form an overwhelming majority of mankind.

2. That a cordial acceptance of what is called the doctrine of the atonement (what that doctrine is, is variously defined), and an exercise of a personal faith in Jesus Christ, is necessary for salvation. Some, however, modify this theory, and affirm that although faith is necessary to salvation, yet the necessary faith may be something short of this, but what it is is left indeterminate. This theory in like manner excludes from salvation the great majority of mankind, and exclusion from salvation, according to popular ideas, means damnation.

The remainder of the popular beliefs on this subject, owing to their indefiniteness, are difficult to formulate in propositions, but they concur in the following affirmations :—

1. That there will be no intermediate state of probation after death, in which it may be possible for those who die not incurably wicked, or whose probation in this life has been passed under unfavourable conditions, to repent and turn to God ; and that mankind at the day of judgment will be separated into two divisions, designated the righteous and the wicked, which will be exhaustive of the human race, the one of which will go to heaven and the other to hell, thus leaving no place for an intermediate class who are fitted for neither.

2. That mankind thus divided will enter into a state of

happiness or misery, which will be unchangeable throughout the eternity to come ; and that the misery of the wicked will be everlasting, admitting neither of alleviation nor of hope ; and that they will constitute an overwhelming majority of mankind.

Such are the chief theories respecting the condition of mankind after death, which have been accepted as the teaching of the Christian revelation by one or more of the chief sections into which the Christian Church is divided. Their extreme awfulness has caused various modifications of them to be propounded. Of these, those which have attained the widest acceptance are—

1. The doctrine of purgatory, as it has been held by the Roman and by several of the Oriental Churches.

This professes to provide an instrumentality whereby those who die without having committed what is designated "deadly sin," and who have fulfilled some condition which entitles them to escape from hell, may expiate their venial sins and become qualified for the enjoyments and the employments of the heavenly world, the expiation being effected through some form of penal suffering. This theory, whatever may be its defects—and they are many—has at least the merit of propounding a means of rescuing from never-ending torment a considerable number of those who, according to widespread popular beliefs, will be consigned to it. The sufferings of purgatory may be great and of long duration, but they will be neither hopeless nor endless, such as those which are attributed to the hell of popular theology.\*

\* I am here speaking of purgatory apart from the latter abuses of this doctrine, such as the efficacy of indulgences, transfers of the superabundant merits of the saints, and various acts supposed to free the sufferers in it from a portion of the sufferings due to their sins.

2. The theory designated "life in Christ," or "conditional immortality."

According to this theory, all men are naturally mortal, and their survival after death is no natural endowment of man, but is a gift bestowed on him through Jesus Christ. Man, however, as originally created, might have avoided death by eating of the tree of life; but this condition of things, in consequence of the sin of their progenitor, now no longer exists; yet, as the result of the Incarnation, all men will be raised again in their bodies and rewarded or punished according to their works, the wicked passing into a state of suffering, which will ultimately destroy them. This is affirmed to be the real teaching of the New Testament respecting future retribution, and that the expressions therein used, such as death, destruction, and others of similar import, signify cessation of existence, and not continued existence in never-ending misery.

3. The theory of universal salvation.

This theory affirms that Christianity teaches that there is a time coming in the distant future when every being who possesses a moral nature will be brought into voluntary subjection to God; that neither reason nor Scripture affords any ground for believing that human probation terminates at death, and that it is the end and purpose of the Incarnation to bring all things into voluntary subjection to Jesus Christ.

4. The theory of the late Professor Maurice.

This theory may be briefly stated as follows:—

The words *aiών* and *aiώνιος*, which are usually translated in the Authorised Version by some words denoting existence without limits to its duration, are frequently used in the New Testament in a moral sense without any reference to time. When they are used to denote duration, they mean an age, a dispensation; but when not so used, they denote a state of mind which is capable of enjoying communion

with God. From this it follows that "eternal life" being such a condition of mind, "eternal death" must be its direct opposite. Consequently the word "heaven" is not intended to denote a definite locality, but a state of mind in close communion with God, and hell one of alienation from him, of which the first constitutes the highest happiness of which a rational being is capable, and the latter its misery and ruin. But inasmuch as it is a great truth that God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live, it follows that all God's punishments are intended to be remedial. Consequently nothing can be worse for the sinner than that God should cease to punish him. On the other hand, God will continue to punish him as long as he continues to sin. As long, therefore, as God continues to punish, there is hope for the salvation of the sinner. Hence it follows that "eternal death," in its most awful aspect, is when God leaves the sinner unpunished in his sin; but what will be the ultimate fate of such the theory leaves in considerable obscurity.

The difficulties with which the theories which we have been considering are attended have been attempted to be concealed, by affirming that it is our duty to avoid passing an opinion on a subject so mysterious, and to leave it in the hands of God. But it is a subject which is far too personally interesting to each of us to be thus quietly passed over; and it is impossible to prevent thoughtful men, by a reason such as this, from giving their gravest consideration to a subject so profoundly interesting to us as individuals. Nor are these difficulties lessened by the consideration, which has been frequently urged, that there are various things respecting the divine government of the universe into which the finite intellect of man cannot penetrate, and respecting which, therefore, it is an inadequate judge. This is undoubtedly true, but it has nothing to do with the subject which

we are now considering ; for the moral questions which are involved in these theories are the very things on which our enlightened conscience and moral sense are fully qualified to decide. Their first and primary dictate is, that might does not constitute right ; and, after making due allowance for the relative positions of God and man, that what would be unholier in man cannot be holy in God. This being so, vain must be all attempts to hinder the human mind from sitting in judgment on the question, whether the results of these theories are in conformity with what reason and revelation affirm respecting the character of that God of whom the Christ of the Gospels is the image and likeness.

Before concluding this chapter, let us endeavour to realise in thought what the words " Everlasting damnation," according to the popular conception of it, really mean. It is almost universally understood to mean *an existence without end, in a state of misery which will never cease.*

Most of those who use these words fail to realise their awfulness. This our limited faculties, even when taxed to their utmost powers, are unable to do. I will, therefore, use an illustration which has been often used before, but which will help us to form an approximate conception of their awful meaning. Let us suppose this entire globe to be dissolved into grains of sand as minute as those on the ocean shore, and that each of these represents a thousand years. Their exhaustion involves a period so immense that our feeble minds are utterly unable to grasp a duration so vast ; but vast as it is, being finite, it must have a termination. Yet when these millions of millions of millions of ages have run out, the misery of those who perish everlastingly will, according to the popular theory, be no nearer a termination than when they first began. This will be equally true if we suppose the sun and the planets and the whole stellar universe which is visible to the best optical instruments, to be resolved into

similar grains of sand, and that each grain represents a thousand years. Still, when every grain has been exhausted, there will still remain an endless existence in never-ending misery beyond. Is not this an appalling thought, even if it is to be the fate of only a single individual? But when we consider the array of figures which would be required to represent the numbers of the human race who have existed in the past—according to the best computations more than twelve hundred millions exist in the present—and that those who, according to the above theories, will thus perish everlasting will constitute an overwhelming majority of them, the thought is so awful that it may well set men thinking whether such theories can possibly be true. Yet such is the action which popular Christianity attributes to Him whom the Christian Scriptures affirm to be the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, and of whom Jesus Christ is the image and likeness.

That these theories are widespread as the genuine teachings of the Christian revelation, the following quotations prove beyond the power of contradiction. The first is from a sermon of one who is in the habit of addressing the largest congregation in London.

“Only conceive,” says the preacher, “that poor wretch in the flames who is saying, O for one drop of water to cool my parched tongue! See how his tongue hangs from his blistering lips, how it excoriates and burns the lips of his mouth as it were a firebrand! Behold him crying for a drop of water! I will not picture the scene. Suffice it for me to close up by saying that the hell of hells will be to thee, poor sinner, the thought that it is to be to thee for ever. Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God, and on it shall be written, For ever. When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments they shall say, For ever. When they howl, echo cries, For ever,” &c.

The following is from a sermon of the same preacher of a much later date :—

“We are sometimes accused, my brethren, of using language too harsh, too ghastly, too alarming, with respect to the world to come ; but we will not soon change our note ; for we solemnly believe that if we could speak thunderbolts, and in every look were a lightning flash ; if our eyes dripped blood instead of tears, no tones, words, gestures, or similitudes of dread, could exaggerate the awful condition of a soul which has refused the Gospel and is delivered over to justice.”

Our second quotation is from a tract written by a Roman Catholic priest, entitled “A Tract for Children and Young Persons. The Sight of Hell. Published by the permission of his Superiors.” We may therefore draw the conclusion that these Superiors, whoever they may be, hold some important position in this Church, and consider that its contents are suitable teaching for children and young people.

“See in the middle of that red-hot floor,” says the author, “stands a girl who looks about sixteen years old ; her feet are bare. Listen, she speaks. ‘I have been standing on this red-hot floor for years. Look at my burnt and bleeding feet. Let me go off this burning floor for one moment.’ The fifth dungeon is a red-hot oven. The little child is in that red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out ; see how it burns and turns itself about in the fire. It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor. God was very good to this little child. Very likely God saw that it would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so it would have to be punished more severely in hell. So God, in his mercy, called it out of the world in early childhood.”

These quotations speak for themselves. The reader will scarcely be surprised to be informed that the tract from which

the last passage is a quotation was very recently circulated among the frequenters of Mr. Bradlaugh's Hall of Science, as an example of what the largest section into which the Christian Church is divided affirms to be the teaching of Christianity respecting future retribution. After all, awful as are these citations, they are little more than the popular doctrines on this subject "writ large." I need hardly add, that it is impossible to put a greater stumbling-block in the way of unbelievers than such representations of Christian teaching.

But not only are the commonly accepted doctrines respecting retribution a stumbling-block to unbelievers, to doubters, and to the heathen, when they are told by the missionary that they are essential features of the Gospel of the God of mercy, grace, and love ; but they are scarcely less so to a large and increasing body of intelligent Christian laymen, who are unable to believe that the Author of the Universe has created the human race with the clear foresight that the result of his creative work would be that an overwhelming majority of those who have lived during the past, and who are living in the present, after the few brief years of this present life, will enter on a life of misery which will present no hope of termination throughout the endless ages of the future. This they are unable to believe ; and when they are told that they must accept this doctrine as true, or in rejecting its truth they must reject Christianity along with it, they are far more likely to adopt the latter alternative than the former. Nor, as I have already intimated, do those who profess to believe in these doctrines act on them as though they were realities ; for if they are true Mr. Spurgeon's description of their awful character is scarcely overdrawn ; yet their belief in them is inert, and they for the most part refuse to contemplate the dread realities behind, or to warn those who are near and dear to

them of their danger in tones of corresponding earnestness.

These things being so, it is become a matter of supreme importance carefully and calmly to investigate whether these doctrines are the teachings of the New Testament respecting that future state of retribution which it affirms to await man beyond the grave; or whether they are unauthorised human inventions. In conducting this inquiry it will be necessary to appeal to both reason and revelation; for, as Bishop Butler justly observes, however imperfect our reason may be, it forms our only guide to enable us to judge of the truth of a revelation. A candle may be an imperfect light, but if we have no other it would be the height of folly to refuse to use it. On moral questions also, affirmations of the enlightened conscience and moral sense are authoritative, for they constitute our only guide to enable us to discriminate between right and wrong, between what is morally good and what is morally evil. The subject must be approached with reverence; but no consideration must hinder us from ascribing holiness, justice, mercy, and love to our Creator; for if He is not holy, just, merciful, and loving, the New Testament affirms of Him that which is not true, and consequently it is impossible that it can contain the record of a Divine revelation.

## CHAPTER II.

### HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY VIEWED IN RELATION TO THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES OF JUSTICE, HOLINESS, AND BENEVOLENCE, AS THEY ARE AFFIRMED BY REASON AND ENUNCIATED BY REVELATION.

It will be necessary to commence the consideration of this subject by inquiring what is meant when it is affirmed that God is just ; that He will judge the world in righteousness ; that the judge of all the earth will certainly do right ; and other similar expressions. In a word, when we ascribe justice to God, do we mean that the Divine justice may be something very different from the human conception of it ? This is a question all important to our present inquiry.

The investigation of this subject is rendered necessary because a class of Christian writers, under the idea that they were defending Revelation, have affirmed that when we ascribe such attributes as justice, holiness, mercy, and benevolence to God, such conceptions are only relatively and not absolutely true. This position is founded on the assumption that the affirmation that God is both infinite, absolute, and the first cause of all things, involves us in a number of logical contradictions. From this the inference has been drawn that because God is infinite and man finite, and inasmuch as the finite cannot comprehend the infinite, all our supposed knowledge of God's character and perfections is not a knowledge of God as he actually exists, but one which is only relative ; or in other words, that justice, holiness, mercy, and benevolence, as they exist in God, may differ

widely from our human conceptions of those qualities. To put the matter plainly, according to this theory, our human conception of justice may differ widely from that of justice as it exists in God ; and when St. Paul declares that He will judge the world in righteousness, God's standard of what constitutes a righteous judgment may differ widely from our human conception of what constitutes justice.

These positions have been endeavoured to be proved by a mass of metaphysical reasonings of a highly abstract character. With them I will not trouble the reader, my intention being simply to appeal to the principles of common sense. I shall only draw his attention to the fact that on these principles as a foundation, that system of philosophy designated Agnosticism is erected, which for all the practical purposes of life is neither more nor less than moral Atheism. Christian Agnostics, however, have taken a different course, and have argued that inasmuch as it is impossible to know anything of God as he actually is by the aid of man's rational faculties, the only way in which a knowledge of Him can be attained is by a revelation. This being so, the inference is drawn that a revelation is not only possible but necessary.

It is simply marvellous that the obvious objection to this last position should have escaped the notice of the eminent metaphysical theologian who first propounded this theory to the English public in a systematic form. According to that theory the human understanding, because it is finite, is incapable of attaining any real knowledge of the infinite, that is, of God. But if this is owing to its limitations, it is impossible that a true knowledge of God can be introduced into a finite mind even by a revelation. A very homely illustration will make this plain. A vessel which is so conditioned that, owing to its size, it is only capable of holding a pint, can by no possibility, no, not even by infinite power, as long as the con-

ditions remain the same, be made to hold a gallon ; for the contrary supposition involves a contradiction. If, then, man, owing to his finiteness, is so conditioned as to be incapable of embracing a true conception of God as he actually is, he must be equally incapable of doing so if his supposed knowledge is derived from a revelation. This being so, the fatal consequence follows that even the revelation of God which the Christian Scriptures affirm to have been made in the person of Him who declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," only conveys a knowledge of God which is relative and not a knowledge of Him as He actually is. In accordance with this principle, the author above referred to speaks of the attributes which the Scriptures ascribe to God as regulative only, by which is meant that although we should act on the assumption that they are true representations of the divine attributes, yet that the realities as they exist in God may differ widely from our human conceptions of them. If this be so, it may be justly asked, What becomes of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation ? Is Jesus Christ the Image of the invisible God, or is He one which is only relative and regulative, and not a veritable revelation of the Father ? If the latter, the incarnation is unreal.

It is hardly possible to conceive of a position more fatal to Christianity than the one in question. God demands love, adoration, and reverence. "The first of all the commandments is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." How, I ask, is it possible to love a being our knowledge of whom is only relative ? If we love God it must be because something really exists in Him which we can recognise as lovely. We are incapable of loving an idea, a conception, a tendency, or anything which is merely relative ; we can only love a being who

possesses attributes which excite our love. We can love God as He shines out in the person of Jesus Christ, because we believe that the character of our Lord is a manifestation of a reality as it exists in God; but it is impossible to arouse in the human heart either adoration, reverence, or love for a conception which has no corresponding reality. The affirmation, therefore, that "God is love," is either an affirmation of a reality as it exists in God or it is misleading and untrue; and when the Apostle adds that "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," it is evident that he must have regarded the affection of love in man as the same as the affection of love which exists in God, or else his utterance is devoid of meaning.

One of the things which imparted to this system of Christian Agnosticism a degree of plausibility was that it not only seemed to break in pieces some of the advanced teaching of unbelieving philosophy, but that it afforded an apparent escape from the difficulties involved in the affirmations both of systematic and popular theology respecting the condition of man after death. Many of these positions—may I not say an overwhelming majority of them—are felt to be inconsistent with the ideas of justice, holiness, and mercy, as they are affirmed by man's enlightened conscience and moral sense. But if these attributes as they exist in God differ from our human conceptions of those qualities, not a few were induced to think that this position opened a way of escape from the difficulties in question. The result, however, of these theories has been to put into the hands of unbelief a more dangerous weapon than it has ever yet wielded against Theism and Christianity, as is abundantly proved by the state of modern unbelieving thought, for they are accepted by Mr. Herbert Spencer as the foundation of his Agnostic philosophy, which affirms that God is unknown and unknowable, and that, therefore, human conduct should be

regulated without any reference to Him. This form of unbelief is now become widespread among cultured unbelievers, being the most plausible yet most dangerous form of unbelief which has ever been propounded.

What, then, are the points in these theories which bear on the subject we are now considering? I answer, that while pure Agnosticism affirms that we can know nothing of the first cause of the universe, *i.e.* God, except that He exists; Christian Agnosticism affirms that our finite conceptions are inadequate as representations of the various attributes as they exist in God, and, therefore, that the Divine attributes may be very different from our human conceptions of them. Consequently the attributes which are ascribed to God in the Scriptures, such as justice, holiness, mercy, benevolence, and even personality itself, are no adequate representations of the Divine realities, which may differ widely from our human conceptions of such qualities; or, to put the position nakedly, the attribute of justice as it exists in God, and in conformity with which He will judge the world, may be something different from that which our conscience and moral sense pronounce to be just and righteous.

Not to enter into a number of interminable discussions respecting the nature of the infinite, I observe that the proper term to describe God's moral attributes is not infinite, but perfect. The reason of this is, that the idea which underlies the word "infinite" is quantitative, whereas some of the attributes which we ascribe to God are incapable of being so viewed. Of these, justice and holiness are examples. Both of these attributes admit only of the idea of perfection, and are entirely free from that of quantity, which is inseparable from that of infinitude. Thus imperfect justice is not justice, but injustice, as far as it is imperfect. I fully admit that when we affirm that justice is an attribute of God, our conception of justice is a human one, but if man is made in

the image of God, as Christianity affirms, and God not fashioned after the image of man, the fact that it is a human conception does not prevent it from being an attribute which really exists in God ; and when we affirm that God's justice is perfect we mean that God's omniscience gives him a perfect knowledge of the minutest circumstances connected with each individual, and that this enables him to estimate correctly the precise degree of his responsibility. This knowledge man has not, and, therefore, as far as this ignorance prevails, his estimate of the character of an act is imperfect, and, consequently, the judgment formed of it partakes of the same degree of imperfection.

But this defect of our knowledge does not prevent our conception of justice from being a true representation of that attribute as it exists in God. The only difference between justice as administered by God, and justice as administered by man, is that the omniscience of God enables him to take into account the circumstances of a man's birth, of his surroundings, and of those tendencies which have been transmitted from ancestors, with the formation of which as an individual he has had nothing to do, and for which he is therefore irresponsible. This a human judge is incapable of doing, and therefore justice, as administered by him, is necessarily imperfect. Thus, in the case of murder, a human judge is incapable of taking into account the various antecedents which have helped to form the murderer's character, and which, as far as they have not been created by himself, modify the guilt of the deed. Human law defines as murder every act of killing which is not done in self-defence, or as the result of an overwhelming provocation, or of unsound mind, and sentences every variety of action that comes within this definition to the penalty of death ; but the omniscience of God enables Him to see in these actions, which according to human law constitute murder, a

great variety of moral guilt. I have selected this particular crime merely as an illustration, but the principle is applicable to every act of which law takes cognisance. Further, there are many crimes, involving the deepest moral delinquency, of which human law is unable to take any cognisance whatever, but which God as a righteous judge will certainly bring into judgment.

The same remarks are true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Divine holiness, *i.e.* the human conception of holiness is a true representation of holiness as it exists in God, or, in other words, God's holiness cannot be one thing and man's holiness another. If this were possible, the command, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," would be utterly unmeaning. I admit that the attributes of benevolence and mercy may be conceived of as admitting of degrees, and that a man may be spoken of as benevolent and merciful without being perfectly benevolent and merciful; but yet the human conception of benevolence and mercy does not differ from the Divine reality, except that these attributes exist in man in an imperfect, whereas they exist in God in a perfect form, summed up in the declaration, "God is love," to which the Apostle adds, "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

From the above reasonings the following deductions are necessary consequences:—

1. The conception of justice, as it is affirmed by the enlightened conscience and moral sense, is a true representation of justice as it exists in God.
2. The human conception of holiness, as it is affirmed by the enlightened conscience and moral sense, is a true representation of holiness as it exists in God.
3. The conceptions of mercy and benevolence, as they exist in God and man, do not differ in kind but in degree, the one being perfect, the other imperfect; the negative side

of God's benevolence being well expressed in one of the collects of the Church of England, "God hates nothing that He has made ;" its positive side by a passage in the Psalms, " His mercies are over all His works."

It will perhaps be urged as an objection to the first of these positions, that whereas it is contrary to the human conception of justice for one man to kill another, yet God has a right to take life at his pleasure. The answer to this is obvious. Justice takes into consideration the relations which exist between the parties, and those which exist between man and man and between God and man differ widely. Man has not given to his brother man the gift of life, and therefore he has no right to take it from him. God has conferred on him this gift, and therefore he has a right to withdraw it at his good pleasure. The only exception to this is, when its withdrawal is attended with suffering which is not inflicted as a punishment for past sin, or with suffering which is not intended to be corrective, *i.e.* to raise the sufferer to a higher degree of moral elevation. In the latter case suffering is not only consistent with the Divine justice, but with the Divine benevolence.

It has been urged in vindication of certain theological positions that the possession of almighty power gives the Creator a right to do what he will with those beings whom he has created. But by no possibility can might be translated into right. The two conceptions differ from one another utterly and entirely ; and all the efforts of an unbelieving philosophy have failed to translate the one into the other. God is almighty in power, but its exercise by Him is limited by His attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and benevolence, from which it is true to say that He cannot swerve, in the same sense as it is true to say, " God that cannot lie ;" *i.e.* to do so would contradict His moral nature, which is the essence of His being. He is glorious in power, but he is still

more glorious in that power in Him can only be exerted in conformity with His moral perfections, for He cannot deny Himself.

Assuming the above principles to be incontestably true, it follows that the righteous judge of all the earth will only hold man accountable for what he is responsible, and that therefore He cannot punish him, consistently with His justice, for anything in him which is independent of the control of his will. To act otherwise would not be justice, but injustice. The things therefore for which we are irresponsible are—

1. That tendency to moral evil which has been transmitted to us by our ancestors, in the creation of which we, as individuals, have had no part. That such a tendency, though greatly varying in degree, exists in man is not a theory but an unquestionable fact.

2. The variations in intellectual powers which exist in different men. Thus some are endowed with the highest mental powers, while others are born idiots. Between these two extremes lie the utmost variety of mental endowment. But with the production of our mental powers we have had nothing to do, for the distinction between one man and another has been determined by a higher power than man. But our intellectual and our moral nature are intimately united and correlated to one another, so that defects in the one cause defects in the other. For those of our actions, therefore, which are due to defects in our mental constitution we are irresponsible.

To these must be added all those actions which are performed in childhood. It is evident that an infant possesses no responsibility. Both its intellectual and its moral nature are undeveloped, and its conscience is unformed. While this continues so it can possess no more responsibility for its actions than an animal. It is true that at an early age it is capable of displaying passions and affections, but these

are purely instinctive. It is no less certain, however, that the irresponsible infant, in process of time, has become a responsible agent; but no human intellect can determine the year, the month, the day, or the hour, when the irresponsible infant became a responsible being. This has been dependent on the gradual and unseen growth of its moral and intellectual powers, and of a rational will, which is capable of resisting the force of the appetites and passions. This being so, the precise period when the irresponsible infant became a responsible agent can only be known to Him who knows all things. Between these two periods, however, there lies one of mixed responsibility and irresponsibility, the precise nature of which can only be correctly estimated by Him who is able to penetrate into the secrets of the heart.

3. The conditions of our birth and surroundings. With respect to these conditions we have had no choice. They are determined for us, and not by us; yet they exert a powerful influence on the formation of our characters, and on very large numbers of mankind that influence is an extremely unfavourable one. The power of this influence for good or for evil is only known to Him who knows all things.

The important influence exerted on our characters by the moral and spiritual atmosphere into which we are born is undeniable. By being born into it we, of necessity, spend all our early years in constantly inhaling it, whereby we become to a great extent assimilated to it. Thus one is born into an atmosphere which is comparatively pure; another, who inherits vicious tendencies from ancestors deeply tainted with vice, is born into a family and a neighbourhood whose entire surroundings are vice and degradation. That such things exert a powerful influence on the formation of character is proved by the fact that in the case of the overwhelming majority of mankind, in that spiritual

and moral atmosphere into which they are born, and which they have breathed from their earliest childhood, they grow up, live, and die. It is true that in certain cases they succeed in elevating themselves above it, but with respect to the great majority the only change is that they sink into a state of greater degradation. Yet for their characters, *as far as they are the inevitable result of their birth, and their moral and spiritual environment, and are not self-caused*, they can have no responsibility ; for responsibility can only exist where there is freedom to do or to forbear.

4. Speaking generally, therefore, inasmuch as where there is no freedom there can be no responsibility, God cannot consistently with his justice punish a man for what he has had no hand in doing. Inherited evil, of whatever kind, is not his sin but his misfortune. It is therefore not the proper subject of punishment. It is in fact no more the subject of just punishment than inherited physical disease. Moral evil, however it may have originated, is doubtless repugnant and therefore offensive to God. But where it is not self-caused it cannot be the subject of just punishment, but, on the contrary, it appeals to the Divine compassion. Hence, in the words of the Evangelist, "God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world."

5. There are a very numerous class of actions which involve only a modified responsibility, viz. those in which conscience and will have to resist the attacks of the appetites and passions, some of which in particular men, and even in particular races of men, exist in almost overwhelming force. Thus of certain races bloodthirstiness is the characteristic ; of others, lying is an inherent vice ; and so are many other vices which it will be unnecessary to enumerate. These are to a great degree the result of their birth and of their moral and spiritual environment. So likewise is it with individuals. Who can say what is the effect which is exerted on

a child who is born into a family which has fallen into a state of moral degradation, and whose education has been one of moral corruption? Further, certain evils in men's characters are in no small degree the result of their bodily constitution. To take a very familiar example: one man is by natural temperament intensely passionate; another is calm, even in the midst of provocation, and exhibits complete self-command. Such differences are in no small measure due to the various degrees of sensitiveness of our nervous systems. Yet in all these cases men are not mere machines, for the conscience and the will are capable of exerting no little power in restraining these appetites and passions, and even in subduing them. Such actions, therefore, involve a modified responsibility, uniting in themselves various degrees of freedom and necessity. In all such actions so intricate is the web, that nothing short of omniscience is capable of disentangling it, and consequently of appreciating the degree of merit or the demerit of the respective agents. Under this head must be included that vast majority of actions of whose merit or demerit men can only judge by outward appearances. None but He who is able to penetrate the secrets of the heart, and who perfectly knows all the antecedents of the individual, can administer a justice which shall be perfectly righteous.

We have hitherto considered the attribute of justice only; but God has other attributes, such as those which the book of Exodus declares to have been announced to Moses on the proclamation of the divine Name, viz. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, shewing mercy for thousands, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." These attributes, equally with justice, form integral portions of the Divine character.

We may therefore safely assume, if there is a God who is a moral being, notwithstanding the clouds and darkness by which in the present visible government of the world he is frequently enshrouded, that justice, mercy, holiness, and benevolence must be attributes of the Creator. I mean by the "clouds and darkness that are round about him" the amount of suffering and of evil with which this world abounds, and which to some extent obscures our view of His goodness. Still, the amount of happiness which the sentient creation enjoys immeasurably exceeds the sufferings which it endures. But if God is a moral being, He must be either benevolent, indifferent to the happiness of His creatures, or malevolent. The last He cannot be, for if He were, the structure of all sentient creatures would have been designed to produce pain; but as matter of fact, there is nothing in their structure the end and purpose of which is to produce suffering. Nor can He be indifferent to His creatures' happiness, for then there would not be that superabundance of enjoyment in the lives of those innumerable hosts of beings which He has created, and who are daily dependent for the means of enjoyment on His providential care. He must, therefore, be benevolent; and the large amount of suffering which beyond all question exists in this world must be due to some other cause than the absence of benevolence, be that cause what it may. But benevolence and mercy are only different aspects of the same quality: God must therefore be merciful. Now the function of mercy begins where that of justice ends. A judge, as a just judge, is bound to take into consideration all the circumstances of the case, and having done so to pronounce sentence according to the degree of the exact responsibility of the individual. It follows, therefore, when we consider the mode in which God will execute judgment hereafter, and the nature of the sentence which he will pronounce, that we must remember that He is not only perfectly

just, but also perfectly merciful, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. These attributes presuppose that after judgment has been pronounced in conformity with strict justice, there will be room for the exercise of mercy; for, to use the words of Scripture, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Doubtless all the attributes of God combine in a perfect unity; "in him mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other;" or, to adopt the language of another Psalmist, "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth shall go before his face;" or that of St. John, "God is love; and he that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him."

But it will be objected, that in the present government of the universe, as far as it comes within our ken, these principles are certainly not carried out, and that so closely is society knit together, that we constantly witness men suffering for sins not their own, and descendants having to endure the consequences of their ancestors' sins. Still more, the forces of the universe, which can only be viewed as expressions of the Divine will, make no distinction between the evil and the good, but both perish alike in the convulsions of nature and the ordinary accidents of life. All this is most true, and from the earliest dawn of human thought to the present hour has formed a subject which has deeply tried the minds of those who believe that this universe is under the moral government of a God, the resources of whose power are devoid of limitations. Witness the book of Job; witness the expostulations of the Psalmists and the prophets of the Old Testament dispensation. What does this prove? Not that God is not righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works, but that the government of this world only forms a portion of an order of providence in which He is carrying out the purposes of His holy pleasure, far too vast to be brought within the grasp of the finite intellect

of man; but in which, under the Divine government, all these providences, inexplicable as they are to our finite understandings, will be ultimately found to have worked together for good. But one thing is certain, that if death is the termination of the conscious existence of man, and if after death all sleep alike the sleep of unconsciousness, men, as individuals, are not rewarded or punished according to their deeds. What, however, if there be a God who is a moral being, is the inference from this? Not that He is indifferent to sin and holiness, to virtue and vice, but that, in the words of the apostle, "He has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness," when all the inequalities of the present state of things will be redressed, and He will reward and punish men in accordance with the strictest principles of justice, holiness, mercy, and love; when, although clouds and darkness are in his present visible dispensations round about Him, it will be seen that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. As we shall prove hereafter, the present imperfection of the moral government of the world forms the strongest reason which we possess, independently of a revelation, for believing that our conscious existence will not terminate at death.

### CHAPTER III.

THE SAME SUBJECT AS SET FORTH IN THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THAT various utterances of the writers of the Old Testament in connection with this subject abound in difficulties, is unquestionable. Many of them ascribe to God the attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and goodness in the most unqualified terms; others, not less numerous, seem to the ordinary student to affirm the contrary. Before I enter on their consideration, I must invite the reader's careful attention to the following all-important facts:—

I. The Scriptures of the Old Testament nowhere profess to be the record of a single revelation, nor is this anywhere claimed for them by the writers of the New. On the contrary, the New Testament affirms that they contain the records of various revelations, “spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, *by divers portions and in divers manners.*”\* It is also obvious that they are addressed to men under a great variety of circumstances, on which their bearing is immediate and direct, but which have long since passed away. Consequently the bearing of such utterances is only indirect on Christian times.

II. These revelations are affirmed by our Lord to be only imperfect revelations of the Divine character and will, and

\* As a rule, the quotations in this work, from both the Old and the New Testament, are from the Revised Version.

He tells us expressly that so imperfect were they compared with the revelation made by Himself, that the greatest prophets and kings of the old dispensation had desired to see the things which His disciples saw, and had not seen them, and to hear the things which they heard, and had not heard them ; and that although John the Baptist was greater than the greatest of the prophets of that dispensation, yet he that was little in the kingdom of God was greater than John.

III. Our Lord expressly affirms that there are precepts in the Old Testament which are not absolutely good in themselves, but are accommodations to the imperfect moral condition of the times, and that even the teaching of the Decalogue is so far imperfect that to enable it to realise the true ideal of morality it requires to be supplemented by His own ; and that this is likewise true of the teaching of the prophets. He came “to fulfil both,” *i.e.* to realise the ideal which underlay them. (Matt. v. 11.)

IV. An overwhelming majority of the utterances of the Old Testament, its threatenings and its promises, are addressed to men not in their individual but in their national capacity. The reason of this is, as Professor Mozley has pointed out in his work entitled “Ruling Ideas in the Early Ages,” that in those times the nation, the tribe, and its chief counted for everything, and the individual for little or nothing. Thus the individuality of the wife was swallowed up in that of the husband, of the child in the parent, of the slave in his master ; the rights of individuals as distinct from those of the families, tribes, or nations of which they formed a part, being scarcely recognised. Attention to this fact will help to explain many of the difficulties with which large portions of the Old Testament are attended, especially its narratives of wholesale slaughters without one word of censure or rebuke, which are so startling to the Christian reader. The truth is that the

moral sentiment of these primitive times saw nothing wrong in them, but only what was a matter of ordinary practice. Let it be observed, however, that this imperfect appreciation of the rights of the individual was no peculiarity of the Hebrew race, but was nearly co-extensive with the ancient world. It was deeply impressed on Roman law and, through its agency, has been the means of transmitting not a few evils to times comparatively modern.

V. The revelations of which these Scriptures are the record are of an extremely fragmentary character, and are for the most part addressed to a single nation. The earlier ones are also accommodated to low forms of human thought and to imperfect conceptions of the character of God and of moral obligation ; but the subsequent ones advance through a succession of gradual stages to more worthy conceptions of both, until they culminate in the person, work and teaching of Jesus Christ. This being so, the books of the Old Testament are, from a Christian point of view, of very unequal value. It is remarkable that in two of them the name of God is not once mentioned.

VI. The historical books constitute the remains of a far larger body of literature which has now perished, but which their authors repeatedly refer to as their authorities for not a few of the facts which they narrate. They do this precisely in the same manner as other historians are in the habit of doing, when they are not eyewitnesses of the events which they record. Further, of not one of the historical books do we know the name of the author with anything approaching to certainty, nor does the author of any one of them make a claim for superhuman guidance in the composition of his work.

VII. The Scriptures of the Old Testament prove beyond the possibility of question that their authors possessed very varied degrees of enlightenment. This is proved by the fact that they at one time apply to God some of the loftiest con-

ceptions of which the human mind is capable, and at others the lower, and I might almost say the animal, passions of man. Nor is the same writer always consistent in this respect, for we not unfrequently find in the same book the loftiest conceptions and the baser passions of man attributed to the Most High. When this is the case, the writer, in attributing such passions to God, must have thought it necessary for the sake of his readers to clothe his utterances in language derived from the current religious and moral conceptions of his day. I will quote a few of these contrasted utterances for the purpose of making my meaning plain.

In Numbers xxiii. 19, Balaam is represented as uttering the following exalted truth :—

“God is not a man that he should lie ; neither the son of man, that he should repent : hath he said, and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ?”

But in Genesis vi. 6, we read—

“And *it repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and *it grieved him at his heart.*” And in 1 Sam. xv. 35, “And Samuel mourned for Saul, and *the Lord repented that he had made Saul King over Israel.*” And in Ezekiel xiv. 9, “And if the prophet be deceived, and speaketh a word, I the Lord have deceived that prophet.” And in Micaiah’s vision, the Lord is represented as saying to the spirit who offers to go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab’s prophets, “Thou shalt entice him, and prevail also. Go forth and do so.”

Jeremiah thus writes respecting God’s omnipresence :—

“Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off ? saith the Lord. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him ? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the Lord.” (Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.)

Similarly grand is the description of His universal pre-

sence in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, and in Solomon's dedication prayer.

"Behold," says he, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less the house that I have builded."

But in Gen. xviii. 20, 21, we read—

"Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

The reader will easily find numerous similar instances scattered throughout the pages of the Old Testament. I have quoted the above merely as examples.

Let us now consider a few of the most important of its utterances, which affirm that God, when he judges men in their individual capacity, will act in conformity with the principles which the enlightened conscience and moral sense in man pronounce to be right.

The very striking narrative which is given in the book of Genesis of Abraham's pleading for Sodom, proves that even in those very early ages eminent saints, such as the father of the faithful, took the same view of the principles on which God would execute judgment as those which I have set forth in the preceding chapter. The reader should observe that the destruction of the cities of the plain is viewed throughout the narrative, not as an act of God's ordinary providence, but as a special judgment on account of the wickedness of their inhabitants, and therefore one in which it would be inconsistent with the Divine character to involve the innocent in the destruction of the guilty. The sacred writer thus describes Abraham's intercession:—

"And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there shall be fifty righteous within the city. Wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous that are

therein ? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked : and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right ? And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake. And Abraham answered, and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes : peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous ; wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five ? And the Lord said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty-five," &c., &c. (Gen. xviii. 23—33.)

In this passage we have that sense of justice which is implanted in man's conscience and moral sense, pleading with God, in executing his special judgments, to act in conformity with the principles which they affirm to be just and right, and a firm expression of faith on the part of the Patriarch that He would certainly do so. "That be far from thee," says he, "to slay"—the entire passage shows that the words "to slay" are used to express the idea of slaying judicially—"the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked ; that be far from thee. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right ?" Let it be observed that the sense of justice and rectitude here appealed to is not some high and incomprehensible justice and rectitude, which may differ widely from our human conception of these qualities, but that which is affirmed to be just and righteous by the moral sense and the conscience of man, and that the Patriarch was firmly persuaded that these attributes, which together compose the character of God, bound Him in executing special judgments, such as the one in question, to act in conformity with those principles. I say "special judgments" because it is impossible that Abraham could have been ignorant that God's ordinary providences, such as storms, earthquakes, volcanoes, and the various accidents of

life, are occurrences in which the righteous and the wicked are involved in one common calamity, and no distinction is made in favour of the former.

But the reason on which he rests his plea is applicable to a far wider class of subjects than the special case referred to. If it is inconsistent with the character of the Judge of all the earth, when He executes special judgments on sinners, to destroy the righteous with the wicked, it is equally inconsistent with it, when He shall judge the world in righteousness, to punish men for the evil in them which is not self-caused, but which is the result of the conditions of their birth and their surroundings—for not embracing a gospel of which they have never heard, or of which they have only heard an imperfect version—for not living up to a light which they have not possessed ; or that He should not take into consideration, in estimating the guilt of an individual, the power of temptation when brought to bear on a nature suited to yield to its seductions. For all these things the fundamental principle involved in the Patriarch's plea is equally valid. That be far from thee, when thou judgest all men according to their works, not to take these things into thy consideration ; that be far from thee to punish men for that for which they are not responsible, and to punish them for that for which they only have a qualified as though they had a full responsibility. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?

Early as was the age of Abraham, he stands in this intercession at a higher moral elevation than any other character in the Old Testament, not even excepting Moses. Moses, it is true, interceded for his own nation in their rebellions, but Abraham for the inhabitants of a place who were both strangers to him and who were sunk in the lowest form of moral corruption. Moses urges for his plea that in destroying the Israelites God would be dishonoured among the Egyptians, who would say that he was unable to fulfil His

promises. Abraham urges as his plea the principles of eternal justice. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Very numerous passages are to be found in the psalmists and the prophets which in the most unqualified terms ascribe justice, holiness, and mercy to God in His capacity of judge. To quote and comment on even a small number of them would swell this chapter to an undue length. I must, therefore, trust to the reader's recollection, and content myself with referring to the eighteenth chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel, which constitutes the clearest utterance in the Old Testament Scriptures respecting the principles on which God will execute judgment on individuals. Let us, therefore, examine it in detail. Before doing so it is necessary to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the point at issue between the prophet and those with whom he was contending was the equity of God's dealings with mankind. This is expressed in the following words:—

"Yet, saith the house of Israel, the way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore will I judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xviii. 29, 30).

In opposition to this charge of injustice the prophet enunciates the principles on which God will execute judgment on men, not in their national, but in their individual capacity. To avoid the necessity of quoting the entire chapter I will state its salient points in the following propositions:—

I. God affirms that he has an absolute right to all the services of his creatures, in virtue of their relation to Him as their Creator. "All souls," saith He, "are mine."

II. Death is announced as the penalty of sin in the following words:—

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” \*

III. “The just man shall surely live.” What constituted a just man in the opinion of the prophet is defined as follows :—

“But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and hath not eaten on the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour’s wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman ; hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry and hath covered the naked with a garment ; he that hath not given forth upon usury nor taken increase ; that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity and hath executed true judgment between man and man ; hath walked in my statutes and hath kept my judgments—he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.”

Two of the duties here mentioned, viz. “hath not given forth upon usury” nor “taken increase,” are not moral duties, but specialities of the Jewish political law, which forbade a Jew to take interest of a Jew, but allowed him to do so of a Gentile. Eating on the mountains was connected with the worship of strange gods. The sins for the commission of which the penalty of death is here threatened are sins which are the opposite of the duties here enumerated.

IV. In executing judgment for the sins of individuals the prophet affirms that God will act in conformity with the

\* When death is threatened in the Old Testament as the punishment of sin, numerous passages make it clear that death in its ordinary sense was the thing intended, and that the view of the prophets did not extend beyond it to any consequences with which sin will be attended in the unseen world. But the peculiar emphasis which is laid on the word death, in this chapter, and in other parts of the prophet’s writings, suggest the idea that he at least had arrived at the conclusion that sin might be attended with serious consequences to the sinner beyond the grave. Still there is no direct affirmation that it would be so ; and it is absurd to suppose that the Jews of this period would understand the threatening in the sense which is attached to it in current popular theology.

strictest principles of equity. Thus, in contradiction to the widespread ideas of the ancient world, which involved whole families in the guilt of some ancestor, more or less remote, he affirms that—

“The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son ; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”

V. The prophet affirms the efficacy of repentance to procure pardon of sin, as follows :—

“If a wicked man turns from all his sins, and does that which is lawful and right, all the transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned unto him ; in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live.”

VI. And the inefficacy of past righteousness if the righteous man falls from his righteousness into sin. Thus the prophet writes—

“If the righteous man turns from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, all the righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned unto him. In the trespass that he hath trespassed, and in the sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.”

VII. The prophet affirms that God has no pleasure in the sinner’s death. Thus he represents God as swearing by himself :

“As I live,” saith the Lord God, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way, and live.”

Thus the principles here enunciated by the prophet, and those enunciated by reason, conscience, and the moral sense, as they are set forth in the preceding chapter, are in strict and absolute agreement.

But it may be urged, and, as a matter of fact, with perfect truth, that no inconsiderable portion of the Old Testament

abounds with declarations of an opposite character, and affirms, both in precept and in fact, that the sins of ancestors are visited on their descendants, and those of the guilty on the innocent. Thus we read in the second commandment :—

“ I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children of them that hate me, unto the third and fourth generation, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”

So again on the occasion of proclaiming the Divine name to Moses—

“ The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion, and gracious ; slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty ; *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.*”  
(Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.)

That the iniquities of ancestors are visited on their descendants in the present imperfect display of the divine government of the world is a fact beyond dispute, and so far these and similar passages only affirm what is the present order of the divine government of the world, it being unquestionable that the sins of ancestors are visited on their descendants ; that the guiltless often reap the fruits of the sins of the guilty ; that the wicked often enjoy uninterrupted prosperity, while the outward lot of the righteous is suffering and self-sacrifice, and that both righteous and wicked are alike involved in a common calamity. But they by no means affirm that this order of things would be a just order, if man had no hereafter, but perished in the grave. Why things are constituted as they are is beyond the ken of man.

But the following utterances do not relate to God's general

providences, but bear on them the appearance of something special. Thus Samuel is represented as saying—

“Thus saith the Lord of Hosts : I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel ; how he lay wait for him on the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go, and smite Amalek ; and all that he hath, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” (1 Sam. xv. 2, 3.)

Not one word is here said that this order was given on account of some present sin which had been committed by this people ; but, on the contrary, it is expressly stated that their extermination is directed as a judgment for a sin committed by their ancestors several hundred years previously. Nor would the difficulty be lessened if some present sin had been given as the reason for directing it, because the “infant and suckling,” who were incapable of sinning, are included in the order.

In a similar manner the direction given in a passage of Deuteronomy with respect to the Canaanites is to destroy everything that breatheth, though elsewhere it is simply to drive them out of the land. It has been urged, therefore, that it was in their power to avoid extermination by retiring from the country, or by tendering submission, which, according to the history, was accepted in the case of the Gibeonites, and even strictly observed, although the treaty was obtained by means of a fraudulent misrepresentation. It is therefore possible that a submission on the part of the other Canaanitish tribes might have been attended with a similar result.

I will quote only one passage more as an example of numerous others. The author of Psalm cxxxvii. thus writes :—

“O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us.

Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones, and dasheth them against the stones."

Similar in point of principle are the wholesale slaughters which are authorised by various utterances which are recorded in the Old Testament. Thus in the war against the Midianites, the order given is to kill every male child among the little ones, and all the married women ; but permission is given to preserve the unmarried as a portion of the spoil, *i.e.* to reduce them to slavery. In like manner for the offence of Achan in purloining a portion of the spoils of Jericho, the order is that not only himself, but his sons, his daughters, and his entire household should be stoned to death, and the author of the book adds, that when this was done the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger.

It may be urged as in some degree affording an explanation of these exterminating slaughters, that in these ages the idea of conversion was unknown, and consequently the only way of getting rid of races deeply sunk in moral degradation was by exterminating them ; but this gives no account for the direction to slaughter infants and young children, who, if they had been allowed to survive, might have enjoyed the privileges to which the Gibeonites were admitted. But the real difficulty is, that in very numerous cases the commands for these slaughters are represented as having been directly given by Him who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ; nay, according to some theories, by Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

I will select one example out of many others as affording proof of the low condition of the moral sentiment of those times, and of the degree in which the Mosaic ordinances were accommodated to it : I allude to that singular institution, the cities of refuge. The object of this institution was to restrain

that bloodthirsty and revengeful spirit which was then sanctioned by public opinion as just and right. Not even the most accidental homicide could escape the vengeance of the blood-avenger, except by taking refuge in one of these cities ; and even if he found him outside it during the life of the high priest, his slaughter was legal. The special case referred to is, if two men went out into a wood to fell timber, and the axe of one of them should accidentally fall off and kill the other, the blood-avenger was justified, according to the moral sentiment then prevalent, in killing the accidental homicide, unless he could escape to one of these cities, and even then, unless he submitted to what might have been a long period of confinement within its bounds. It is not too much to say that any one who took the life of another under such circumstances in any civilised modern country would be justly subject to the highest penalties known to the law. Yet there have not been lacking theologians who have seen in this institution a type of Christ.

What shall we say, then, respecting this very numerous class of precepts and practices which are recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and of which the foregoing are only cited as examples ? Are they to be viewed as revelations of that justice and holiness in conformity with which God will judge the world in righteousness ? or do they belong to that class of precepts which were given to the Israelites because of the hardness of their hearts—i.e. because such was their low spiritual and moral condition, that anything higher or nobler would have been incapable of being enforced on them ? or are not a few of them due to the fact that the writers failed to realise those conceptions of Divine justice and holiness which were enunciated by their great ancestor when he interceded for the inhabitants of Sodom ? That not a few of these utterances were accommodations to the low spiritual and moral conditions of the times is not

only affirmed by our Lord but by several of the more enlightened prophets. Thus Ezekiel, after denouncing the reiterated rebellion of the Israelites, writes—

“I lifted up my hand to them in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. *Wherefore I gave them statutes which were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live, and I polluted them in their own gifts.*” (Ezekiel xx. 23—26.)

This passage unequivocally affirms that there are statutes and judgments in the Old Testament which are not founded on the principles of eternal justice and holiness, but which were designed to subserve a temporary purpose. Hence it follows, in conformity with the prophet's declarations which we have considered, with the affirmations of conscience, and, as we shall see hereafter, with the declarations of the New Testament, that it is impossible to quote them as affording any support to certain theories as to the principles on which God will execute his final judgment on mankind, or as justifications of many practices which have been sanctioned by different sections of the Christian Church. Further, they do not afford the smallest reason for affirming, when we ascribe justice and holiness to God, that these attributes can mean some indefinite conception of justice and holiness which may differ widely from what our conscience and moral sense affirm to be just and holy. The real difficulty of the passage is, the apparent affirmation that “the statutes which were not good, and the judgments whereby they should not live,” are represented as the direct utterances of the *Holy One*.

To omit numerous other prophetical utterances of a similar import, especially those which speak of the sacrificial ritual, the last prophet of the Old Testament dispensation declares

expressly that one of the Mosaic ordinances did not represent the mind of God, but that it was given as an accommodation to the moral condition of the times, viz. the Jewish law of divorce. This was so lax that when a wife no longer found favour in her husband's eyes it was permitted to him to give her a writing of divorce, and to put her away. Respecting this law the prophet thus writes :—

“ Yet ye say, Wherefore ? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously ; yet she is thy companion and the wife of thy covenant ; and did he not make one ? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one ? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to thy spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. *For the Lord God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away.* ” (Malachi ii. 14, 16.)

Yet the following is the precept in Deuteronomy :—

“ When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorce, and give it into her hand, and send her out of his house.” (Deut. xxiv. 1.)

But the authority of the great teacher come from God is far higher than that of any prophet. He, therefore, who declared that He came not to abrogate the law but to fulfil it ( $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\hat{\omega}\sigma\alpha$ ), i.e. to realise its true ideal and to purge it of its defects, thus taught with respect to this enactment, in reply to the following question of the Pharisees :—

“ And there came unto him the Pharisees and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife ? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you ? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorce, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, *For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this com-*

*mandment.* · But from the beginning of the creation, male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the twain shall become one flesh. . . . . What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.” (Mark x. 2—9.)

Such an affirmation involves a great principle, viz. that there are precepts in the Old Testament which do not realise the ideal of the attributes of justice and holiness as they exist in God, or as they are affirmed by the enlightened moral sense and conscience of man. It is impossible to confine the principle which underlies this utterance to the single case before us ; on the contrary, it must be true of every precept and practice in the Old Testament which conflicts with our Lord’s teaching, and with everything in it which ascribes to God a character contrary to that of Him who is his moral image and likeness, and who has affirmed of Himself, “ He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

St. Luke’s Gospel contains the following narrative, which has the most intimate bearing on the subject we are now considering. It is as follows :—

“ And it came to pass, that when the days were well nigh come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem ; and sent messengers before his face ; and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them. But he turned, and rebuked them ; and the went to another village.” (Luke ix. 51—56.)

The translators add in the margin, “ Many ancient copies add, ‘even as Elijah did.’ Some add, ‘and he said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.’ Some, but

fewer, ‘for the Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.’”\*

Whether the Evangelist really wrote the words, “even as Elijah did,” matters little as far as our present argument is concerned; for it can hardly be doubted that James and John, when they made this proposal, must have had the narrative in the Book of Kings in view, which describes Elijah as calling down fire from heaven and consuming his enemies; and that they reasoned that as their Master was far greater than Elijah, an insult offered to Him ought not to meet with a less severe vengeance. If the other passages inserted in the margin were really uttered by our Lord, it somewhat strengthens our position; but it is sufficiently strong without them. What, I ask, is the necessary inference from our Lord’s rebuke? That He viewed the act of Elijah, however necessary it might have been for the then times, as inconsistent with the revelation of the Father made in His own divine person, and with the ideal of the morality which He taught.

But the whole of our Lord’s teaching and practice, and that of the writers of the New Testament, prove that the revengeful feelings of the great men of the Old Testament dispensation were inconsistent with the true ideal of morality. Of this the following utterances afford decisive proof:—

“Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you,

\* It is easy to account for the omission of these words on the part of some copyist, on the ground that he thought them a reflection on the act of Elijah; but if he did so with that intention, he ought not to have stopped short where he did, but to have gone further, and omitted the fact that our Lord rebuked the disciples for having made such a proposal. If, however, they are not genuine, it is difficult to account for their insertion; for, to adopt the language of Mr. Mill, in speaking of our Lord’s discourses as they are recorded in the three first Gospels, they are far above the moral elevation of our Lord’s primitive followers to have invented them, and equally above that of the early Christians.

that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and on the unjust." (Matt. v. 43—45.)

And—

" Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing ; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the sons of the Most High, for He is kind toward the unthankful, and the evil." (Luke vi. 35.)

In conformity with these utterances is the whole tone of apostolic teaching, yet the writers of the Old Testament habitually imprecate vengeance on their enemies, and even devote them to destruction ; but we look in vain for their prayers for them !

There are also not a few utterances in the Old Testament which not only enunciate a morality, which is an accommodation to the low moral condition of the times, but which, unless we admit that some human element has entered into them, ascribe evil directly to God. Of these it will be sufficient to cite the following as examples : Thus the prophet Ezekiel, speaking of the hypocrisy of those whom he was addressing, in practising iniquity, and coming to a prophet to inquire of God, writes—

"I, the Lord, will answer him by myself ; and I will set my face against that man ; and I will make him a sign and a proverb ; and I will cut him off from the midst of my people ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. *And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet*, and I will stretch out my hand upon him ; and I will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." (Ezekiel xiv. 7—9.)

So the prophet Isaiah—

" I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I, the Lord, do all these things."

So also another prophet—

“Is there evil in the city, and I have not done it ?”

The vision of Micaiah also is a very striking illustration of this line of thought. In it Jehovah is represented as sitting on His throne, and all the hosts of heaven as standing by Him, on His right hand and on His left. Jehovah is then represented as saying, “Who will entice Ahab, that he may go, and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said, on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his propbets. And he said, Thou shalt entice him, and prevail also. Go forth, and do so.” (1 Kings xxii. 20—22.)

Such is the imagery of the vision, which is evidently deeply coloured with the prophet’s own conceptions of the mode of the Divine acting. I need not stop to point out the imperfections of the Divine holiness which are contained in the language in which it is described. It will be sufficient to set against it the assertion of St. James—

“Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, and he himself tempteth no man. But each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed.” (James i. 13, 14.) Yet the vision, in its naked form, represents the All Holy as expressing His approbation of tempting Ahab to perish through the medium of a lie.

With respect to the affirmation, “If a prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet; and I will set my face against that prophet, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people,” I ask emphatically, Can God deceive? Can God lie? Can He directly in His own person dictate statutes which are not good,

and judgments whereby men cannot live? Can He punish a prophet for being deceived, if He Himself is the cause of the deception? The New Testament contains the following utterances which dispose of all these questions once and for ever:—

“God that cannot lie.” (Titus i. 2.)

“Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. iv. 4.)

What then is the meaning of the imperfect moral utterances which are contained in the Old Testament? The reader should observe that not a few of them are not intended to be statements of abstract morality, but are political precepts; or in other words, a code of political legislation, which is again and again in the New Testament ascribed to Moses. What then is the end and purpose which is proposed by all such legislation? Not to announce abstract principles of right, but to enact such laws as are suited to the moral condition of those for whom they are intended. A body of laws framed on principles of high moral obligation would have been unfit for a nation like the Israelites, just emerging from a condition of barbarism and slavery. All that a legislator can effect is to frame his laws a little in advance of the current moral standard. Even in modern highly civilised European states, a legislator is compelled to enact not what his conscience pronounces to be absolutely just, but the nearest approximation to it which the people for whom he legislates will bear. This consideration will help to explain many of the precepts of the Old Testament which fail to realise the ideal of morality as it is affirmed by our enlightened conscience and moral sense, and realised in the teaching of the New Testament. They, in fact, formed the political code of the people of Israel.\*

\* As it is impossible in a mere chapter to do justice to this subject, I must refer the reader who is desirous of entering on it more fully, to a work of the

But the reader will naturally inquire, even after he has given full weight to these considerations, How has it come to pass that not a few of these precepts of imperfect morality are introduced with such expressions as "The Lord said unto Moses," "Thus saith the Lord," and are even represented as the direct utterances of the Holy One? Are they really intended to affirm that the utterance which follows was the result of a special revelation then and there communicated to the prophet; or do they only mean that Moses and the prophets spoke in accordance with the special endowments which were imparted to the former to qualify him for filling the office of legislator, and to the latter to enable them to fill the office of preachers of righteousness to the people of Israel, and that it was in virtue of their special commission and of their special endowments that they made use of the formulas in question?

A cursory perusal of the Old Testament is sufficient to prove that it was the custom of these early ages to ascribe everything which we now attribute to second causes to the direct and immediate agency of God. To this immediate agency its writers ascribe the activity of the forces which energise in nature, and not a few of those which energise in man. Hence it has come to pass that various actions are ascribed to a direct Divine impulse which the line of thought pervading the New Testament forbids us to attribute to Him who is the Spirit of holiness, truth, and love. Two examples will illustrate my meaning. The author of the Book of Judges, after narrating the story of Samson's wager and the trick by which his companions attained the solution of

late Dr. Mozley, Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, entitled "Ruling Ideas in the Early Ages," in which the learned Professor has discussed at considerable length the imperfections of the moral teaching of the Old Testament. In making this reference, however, I am far from wishing to imply that I consider his solutions of the difficulties in question always adequate; yet the book is one of deep interest.

his riddle, thus describes the mode in which he paid the forfeit which he had incurred :

*“And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he went down to Ascalon and smote thirty men of them and took their spoil, and gave the changes of raiment unto them that declared the riddle.”* (Judges xiv. 19.) That is to say, that he killed thirty persons who, as far as anything appears to the contrary in the narrative, had given him no offence, to give thirty changes of raiment to his thirty companions who had seduced his wife into betraying his secret.

In the Second Book of Samuel we thus read—

“And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and he moved David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah,” &c., &c. (2 Sam. xxiv., which see.)

Here the impulse to an act evidently regarded by the author as a great sin, is directly attributed to the Lord. But the author of the far later Book of Chronicles attributes the temptation to Satan. Thus he writes—

“And Satan” (margin, an adversary) “stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.” (1 Chron. xxi. 1.)

Thus the temptation which is directly ascribed to the Lord in the Book of Kings is not less directly ascribed to Satan in the Book of Chronicles, or it may be to some adversary of the Israelites, the same word meaning both Satan and adversary, just as in the New Testament the word “devil” (*διάβολος*) has the double meaning of devil and calumniator.

The real explanation of these not infrequent direct attributions of evil to God is that there is no line of distinction drawn in the Old Testament between what God does by his own immediate and special agency and what he permits to be done by second agents, whether they be evil spirits, men, or the forces of nature. We also find an occasional absence of this distinction in the New Testament. Thus St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians, “For this cause God sendeth

them a working of error" (*ἐνέργειαν πλάνης*, an inworking of error, but the rendering "strong delusion" of the Authorised Version fairly expresses the meaning of the Greek); but St. James's affirmation, that God is never the tempter of men to evil, leaves no doubt as to the real meaning of these and similar expressions. Thus he writes—

"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted of evil; and he himself tempteth no man."

All similar temptations, as well as various evils which affect the bodies of men, are uniformly ascribed in the New Testament either to the devil, *i.e.* Satan, or to his subordinate agents, designated demons. We may, therefore, conclude that all ascriptions of evil to God's direct and immediate agency which are found in the Old Testament are due to the fact that its writers in their utterances on such subjects were either not elevated above the conceptions of the times, or else that they accommodated themselves to them.

There is a section of the Book of Exodus which throws considerable light on the use of these formulae in the Old Testament Scriptures. I allude to those chapters which prescribe to the minutest details the mode in which the tabernacle was to be constructed. They are introduced with the usual formula, "The Lord said unto Moses," but we are informed that previously Moses received an injunction—an injunction which is twice repeated—to make it according to a pattern which had been shown him in the Mount. This injunction is thus referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews—

"Even as Moses is warned of God, when he is about to make the tabernacle; for see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the Mount."

It is, therefore, clear that the author of this epistle was of opinion that Moses was admonished to be careful to frame the

tabernacle according to a model which he had previously seen in vision. But if he was admonished to frame it according to a pattern previously shown him, what is the meaning of his having been instructed as to every, even the minutest, detail by a number of special revelations? Surely these would have rendered the injunction to be careful to frame it according to the pattern unmeaning. It follows, therefore, that the formula, "The Lord said unto Moses," so often repeated in these chapters, was not intended to affirm that every detail of the construction of the tabernacle was then and there imparted to him by a number of special revelations, but that it is used because, according to the wisdom given to him to enable him to discharge the duties of his office, he constructed according to the model which he had previously seen in vision.

Chapters xiv. to xvii. of the First Book of Kings throw a light on the nature of some of the prophetic utterances to which the student would do well to take heed.

The prophet Ahijah dooms the entire house of Jeroboam to destruction on account of his sin in making the golden calves. Baasha carries this threat into execution by exterminating his entire household. It is true that he is nowhere represented as receiving a Divine direction to do this; but if he was acquainted with the denunciation of the prophet, he might full well have considered that in carrying this threat into execution he was acting in conformity with the Divine will. Yet we read in the sixteenth chapter, "And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, came the word of the Lord against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil which he did in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like unto the house of Jeroboam, and *because he smote him.*" Still more striking is the case of Jehu. The prophet who anointed him king gives him a direct commission to exter-

minate the house of Ahab, and in 2 Kings xii. the Lord is represented as saying, "Because thou hast done well, in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and done unto the house of Ahab according to all that which was in my heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." Yet the prophet Hosea thus writes respecting the act in question, "And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel ; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease." (Hosea i. 4.) The reader will remember that it was at Jezreel that one of the great slaughters of the house of Ahab took place.

It is worthy of remark that the writers of the New Testament have never once used these formulas. The nearest approach to doing so is the following utterance of St. Paul :—

"If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge, that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. xiv. 37.)

The Christian prophet Agabus also is recorded by St. Luke, after binding his own hands and feet with St. Paul's girdle, to have addressed him in the following words : "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." But according to the subsequent history, the Jews did not bind Paul and deliver him into the hands of the Romans, but, on the contrary, when they were striving to kill him, the Romans, in direct contradiction to the wishes of the Jews, rescued him out of their hands and bound him with two chains, which act was the means of St. Paul's escape from their malice.

This passage, therefore, throws great light on the use of this and similar formulas with which the prophets prefaced their utterances. Agabus had received a Divine direction to

warn Paul of the danger which he was about to encounter in going to Jerusalem, but the particular form in which this intimation was conveyed must have been the creation of his own mind, and not dictated by the Divine Spirit, for the details of the utterance were not realised by the event; yet the whole is prefaced by the words, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost." It is evident that St. Luke, who has recorded both the utterance and the facts, saw no inconsistency between the words which he has attributed to Agabus and the facts as he has narrated them.

Another passage in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians throws additional light on the nature of the utterances of the prophets of the Christian Church, whose rank in it was only second to that of apostles. (1 Cor. xii. 28.)

"Let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern. But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence, for ye all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted; *and the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets*, for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, as in all the Churches of the saints." (1 Cor. xiv. 29—33.)

This passage proves—

1. That a prophet of the Christian Church was so far capable of abusing his prophetic gift as to use it in such a manner as to be capable of creating disorder in the Christian assemblies. See text and context.
2. That when a prophet spake in the congregation, the others who possessed the prophetic gift were to sit by and discern the nature of his utterance. This implies that they were to determine how far it was in conformity with the Divine Spirit, or how far a human element was mixed up with it.
3. That the prophets usually spoke out of the fulness of their ordinary Christian consciousness, and not as the result

of a special revelation then and there communicated, though occasionally a prophet received a special Divine communication, on his notification of which the prophet who was addressing the assembly was to keep silence.

4. That the prophetic impulse was subject to the control of the prophet's will.

Now it is incredible that the Christian prophet, endowed as he was with the gifts of the Spirit promised by our Lord, possessed an inferior degree of enlightenment or of Divine guidance to that of his Jewish brother. If, then, the utterances of the former required to be "discerned" (*διακρινέτωταν*, a very strong word, of which the English *discern* is but a feeble rendering) by the other prophets who were present in the congregation, before they could be accepted as certainly conveying the mind of Christ; or if, as in the case of Agabus, the Divine Spirit only suggested to their minds a general truth, and not the special form in which it was delivered, but left it to the prophet to fill up its details, it is only reasonable to assume that elements of imperfection must have been mixed up with the utterances of the prophets of the Old Testament dispensation whenever they contain anything which is inconsistent with the teaching of our Lord, or with the character of God as it is revealed in his divine person, or with the affirmations of the enlightened conscience, which is the voice of God speaking in man. It seems to me that on this principle alone is it possible to explain those utterances of the Old Testament which represent God as tempting men to sin, or as deceiving a prophet, or as authorising a subordinate agent of His providence to carry out His purposes by inspiring men who were regarded as prophets to utter a lie, and directing them to go forth and do so. Balaam, as we have seen, at a far earlier age had enunciated the great truth, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent." Everything, therefore, in the Old Testament which

represents God as possessing a character either different from this, or from that of the Jesus of the Gospels, must be either a human element which has entered into the prophetic utterances, or an accommodation to the low spiritual and moral condition of the times.

The utterances of the New Testament on the subject we are considering are clear, simple, and harmonious, and may be all summed up in the following brief affirmations of our Lord and His apostles :—

“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” (John v. 22.)

“The Son of Man shall come in the glory of the Father, with his angels ; and then shall he render to every man according to his deeds.” (Matt. xvi. 27.)

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath One that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.” (John xii. 48.)

“The times of this ignorance God overlooked ; but now he commandeth all men that they should everywhere repent, inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts xvii. 30, 31.)

What, then, are the general conclusions from the positions laid down in this and in the preceding chapter ?

1. That in the judgment to come, men will be held responsible not for those things in them in the production of which they have had no choice, but only for those things in which they have been voluntary agents.

2. That in judging each individual, God will make allowance for the power of the temptations by which the individual has been assailed. This is required alike by His attributes of justice and of mercy.

3. That God will judge the world in conformity with His

attributes of justice, righteousness, mercy, and love, and with that perfect knowledge of the circumstances of those whom He judges, and of their inmost motives, which enables Him to estimate aright the precise degree of the responsibility of each individual ; and that all the theories respecting the principles on which He will finally judge mankind, which represent Him as acting contrary to justice, holiness, mercy, and love, and the perfection of His knowledge, are contrary to the affirmations of the enlightened conscience, and that great truth, which lies at the foundation of Christianity, that Jesus Christ is the revelation of the moral character of God.

4. That God will judge the world in righteousness, in Him who is the Son of God and the Son of Man, the perfect man, Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man, of whom His beloved disciple has written : " We have beheld, and bear witness, that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

5. That every principle or precept found in the Old Testament, which is inconsistent with the character of God as it is revealed in our Lord's person, actions, and teaching, forms no portion of the Christian revelation, but is due either to an imperfect understanding of the nature of the prophetic utterances, or to the fact that they were accommodations to the low moral and spiritual condition of the times.

6. The mystery of evil as it exists both in the physical and moral worlds is incapable of being solved by any faculty of man, and is left unsolved by revelation ; but the latter affords grounds for hoping that what we see so imperfectly here we shall be able to comprehend more perfectly hereafter.

## CHAPTER IV.

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE VALIDITY OF THE REASONS WHICH WE POSSESS, INDEPENDENTLY OF A REVELATION, FOR BELIEVING THAT MAN WILL SURVIVE THE STROKE OF DEATH; AND THAT HIS CONDUCT HERE WILL AFFECT HIS CONDITION HEREAFTER.**

IT is hardly possible to conceive of two questions more profoundly interesting than the following :—

1. Is there reason for believing that *that which we designate ourselves* will possess a conscious existence after the death of our bodies ?
2. Assuming that a conscious existence awaits us beyond the grave, is there reason for believing that our conduct here will exert an influence on our happiness or misery hereafter ?

I have used the words “*that which we designate ourselves*” instead of the usual terms employed in this controversy, for the purpose of keeping clear of all subordinate issues, because the all-important question is the following : Shall we, in our conscious personality, not only survive the death of the body, but also have a clear conscious perception in the world beyond the grave that we are the very beings who formed for ourselves certain characters, performed certain actions, and neglected to perform certain duties during the past period of our existence. This consciousness of sameness and identity is the necessary condition for our being the subjects of a righteous judgment hereafter for our conduct here.

The discussion of this subject is spread over a very voluminous mass of literature, both ancient and modern. I

cannot but think, however, that all the really salient points of the controversy lie within a narrow compass, because the arguments for believing in a future state which at the present day will be admitted to possess validity, independent of the affirmations of a revelation, are comparatively few. In former times great reliance was placed on reasonings founded on the metaphysical nature of the soul; but there is now a general agreement among thoughtful men, that our faculties are inadequate to enable us to penetrate into what constitutes the abstract essence of being of any kind. Thus all the investigations of modern science have failed to determine what either matter, life, or sensation are in their essential being. Respecting what motions are in themselves, or how they are translated into sensations, and thence into thoughts, notwithstanding the innumerable theories which have been propounded, we know absolutely nothing. Precisely similar is it with that which we designate the soul: respecting what constitutes its essence, we are profoundly ignorant. Consequently all reasonings which are based on such supposed knowledge are valueless. This at once disposes of nearly all the reasonings of the ancient philosophers on this subject, and not a few of the modern ones. We may read them with interest, but they fail to produce conviction. I think that the grounds for believing in such survival, which are derived from reason alone, may be stated under the following heads:—

**I.—THE ALL BUT UNIVERSAL BELIEF OF MANKIND IN A STATE OF EXISTENCE AFTER DEATH.**

I say “all but universal,” because it has been disputed whether a few tribes, which are sunk into an extreme state of barbarism, entertain this belief. One thing, however, is certain, that all those who are elevated above that condition have done so, except a few individuals who have reasoned

themselves out of it. It therefore amounts to a practical universality. From this the inference may be justly drawn, that it is suggested by the nature and constitution of man. Certain it is that it cannot have been deduced by an act of reasoning, because the numerous uncultivated races of mankind who believe in the survival of the personality after death, however imperfect may be the form of that belief, are incapable of that amount of abstract thought which would be necessary to prove it. This being so, a belief which is practically universal cannot be a delusion pure and simple, but there must be a reality of some kind which corresponds to it.

Various attempts have been made to account for the universality of this belief on other principles than that it has originated in the constitution of human nature. Of these the two following demand a brief notice.

1. That the intensity of the desire that men have to live, has suggested the idea of a survival after death.

2. That this belief has been suggested by the act of dreaming, which has led uncultivated races to infer that there is something in man which is capable of energising apart from the body. From this it is urged that the inference is an easy one, that if man has a soul distinct from the body, it may continue to exist after the death of the body. To this it is added that the fact that some men have seen their departed friends in dreams has suggested the belief that they have not only survived the dissolution of their bodies, but that they have actually appeared again.

With respect to the first of these theories, I reply that men have numerous and very strong desires which do not suggest the idea of their future realisation. Why, then, should this particular desire suggest, not only to a few individuals, the belief that man will survive the stroke of death, but produce an all but universal belief that he will thus survive, and that too in the face of the phenomena of death, which, at least to

the natural eye, have all the appearance of a termination of existence.

Second, the dream theory.

It falls outside the limits of this work to discuss the phenomena of dreams. I must, however, ask the reader to observe that the thing to be accounted for is not what they may have suggested to a few individuals, but how it is possible that they can have suggested the idea of an existence after death to both the civilised and uncivilised races of mankind in every part of the globe, however little intercourse they may have had with one another. It will scarcely be urged that the idea was likely to have occurred except to a few. Are we then to assume that these turned missionaries, and not only proclaimed this truth to their brother savages, but that they succeeded in persuading them to embrace it? For the belief, as I have said, is all but universal. Let the existence of this belief be accounted for, on some principle which will bear rational investigation; otherwise the inference is inevitable, that it is the result of the constitution of human nature.

## II.—THE ARGUMENT FROM THE GREATNESS OF MAN'S INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL POWERS AND THE IMPERFECT SCOPE THAT THIS LIFE AFFORDS FOR THEIR EXERCISE AND DEVELOPMENT.

This argument rests on the assumption that there is a Creator of the universe, who is all-powerful and all-wise; but to those who affirm that there is no evidence for belief in such a Creator, it has no cogency. It may be briefly stated thus—

Mankind are brought into existence in possession of various faculties, and no inconsiderable number with faculties of a high order, which are all capable of a higher and higher development. Yet they seldom attain to their full maturity, but are cut short in their career by death. Thus those who

die in the first year of their existence constitute one-fifteenth of the human race, and more than one-third die before they attain the age of twelve. This being so, the bringing such multitudes into existence, endowed with the lofty faculties of man, seems absolutely purposeless and a mere waste of creative power, if man perishes at death. Of those who die in youth and early manhood, the brightest prospects are nipped in the bud ; and no small number of the remainder are cut off before their powers have attained to their full maturity ; and not a few die within a short interval after they have attained to it. Even at best, the period of man's full activity is brief, and not a few of the most highly gifted die in the midst of their work, for which by a long course of training during early life they have become pre-eminently fitted, and even in the midst of their highest usefulness. It may be urged that owing to the limitation of our faculties, we cannot penetrate into the purposes of the Creator. This, however, is only partially true ; for it is quite within our compass to affirm that if man perishes at death, the things which I have above referred to involve either a purposeless expenditure of power, or a lack of power, or of wisdom on the part of the Creator. But if He is all-powerful and all-wise this is impossible. It therefore follows that death cannot be the termination of man's existence, but that it is a removal into a sphere of activity different from the present, where his powers will find a sphere fitted for that development which, for reasons into which we cannot penetrate, has been denied him here.

### III.—THE SURVIVAL OF THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL POWERS IN THEIR FULL VIGOUR UP TO A BRIEF INTERVAL BEFORE DEATH.

While it is a fact that in a majority of cases the intellectual and moral powers decay with the decay of the body, yet numerous instances have occurred where they have continued

in full vigour up to the moment of dissolution, even in cases where the body has been worn out by a prolonged course of exhausting disease. In such persons the intellect has been as unclouded, the affections as active, and the faith as strong, the moment before death, as they ever have been during life. It is evident, therefore, that the diseases which have worn the body out have left the intellectual and moral powers untouched. But in a moment all is changed. The whole of those powers which were in full activity immediately before death are, to all appearance, gone without leaving a trace behind. Nothing remains before us but an organism, devoid alike of motion, intelligence, affection, and volition. In one minute these three last were in full activity; in the next, if man perishes at death, they have ceased to be. Is it credible that they have perished in an instant? Perhaps no one can fully appreciate the force of the impression which such a scene makes on the mind of the beholder, except those who have witnessed the sudden collapse of all those powers which really constitute the man. To those who have witnessed such a scene it seems incredible that the self-conscious personality, the intellectual powers, and the warm affections which at one moment were in full activity, have ceased to exist in the next. It is true that this is an argument the force of which it is impossible to exhibit in the conclusion of a syllogism; but it may full well outweigh the force of many an adverse one. With respect to such a death the natural language of the mind is, He is gone, not, He has ceased to be.

The contrary opinion is founded on the fact that as we are at present constituted, our mental powers can only display themselves through a bodily organism, and that in an overwhelming majority of cases they wear out with that organism. From this the inference is drawn that they cease to exist as soon as the body ceases to live. This, however,

by no means invalidates the argument in the preceding paragraph; for it is unquestionable that exceptions to this general rule exist, and it is on these exceptions that the argument is founded. But the inference in question is greatly in excess of the premisses. I fully admit that the fact that our mental powers and our bodily organisation are most intimately correlated is unquestionable; and that the latter, when disordered, is capable of producing a corresponding disturbance in the former. Of this the proof is not far to seek, for it is a matter of painful daily experience. But this intimate correlation is all that modern science has succeeded in establishing; yet this by no means proves that the man and his bodily organism are identical. The moment after death the body is there before us, little changed from what it was the moment before death; but all that constitutes the man is gone in a moment, we know not whither.

How then stands the case? What do we know and what do we not know? Respecting the real nature of life we know absolutely nothing. All the investigations of scientific men have failed to determine what it is, notwithstanding the ardour with which they have pursued them. Equally ignorant are we of the ultimate nature of mind. Both remain at the present time as profound a mystery as they were at the earliest dawning of philosophic thought. This being so it is impossible to prove, though it is easy to affirm, that death is the destruction of our personality. All that we know about it is its outward phenomena, viz. that it suspends the manifestation of every previously existing power; and that it liberates the chemical forces, which were previously held in check by the vital ones, so that they are able, without let or hindrance, to effect the dissolution of our bodily frame. But on our mental powers these forces are powerless to act. Death, it is true, removes them from the sphere of our cognisance, but that it destroys them there is not a

tittle of evidence, except on the assumption that brain and mind are identical, for which the evidence is entirely wanting. All that scientific investigation has succeeded in establishing is that, as we are at present constituted, mind requires a bodily organism for its manifestation, and that in every act of mental activity there results a corresponding motion in the brain ; but how these motions are translated into thought, and how thought originates motions in the nervous system, we know nothing. Whether our personality will survive the stroke of death, science, *qua science*, can neither affirm nor deny ; for it is a question which lies outside its proper sphere, and must ever continue to do so until it can prove that mind is nothing but a modification of matter. One thing, however, we know for certain, that we are personal voluntary agents, free from the iron law of necessary agency, and capable of producing activities both within and outside our bodies by an act of, and at the dictation of, our wills. This being so, it is impossible to affirm that man is incapable of existing, thinking, and acting under other conditions than the present ones. Consequently my argument remains untouched, despite of any number of unproved theories respecting the nature of mind and body.

#### IV.—THE MORAL ARGUMENT.

This argument rests on the assumption that there is a God who is not only the Creator of the Universe, but who is also its moral Governor. I say "rests on the assumption," because the proof of it would far transcend the limits which must be assigned to this work. Assuming, therefore, that a God exists, who is the moral Governor of the universe, the argument that a state of retribution awaits man after death is equivalent in force to what is designated a demonstration. It may be briefly stated thus—

It is incredible that a moral Being, who has endowed man

with a moral nature, can be indifferent as to whether he realises or not the purposes for which He has endowed him with that nature ; *i.e.* can be indifferent to virtue and vice.

This being so, it follows that God, as the moral Governor of the world, will render to the virtuous and the vicious according to their deeds ; or, to put this portion of the argument clearly and distinctly, it is incredible that His moral government should be so conducted that a career of successful villainy should be a more prudent course to pursue than one of virtue and self-sacrifice, which it undoubtedly would be, in very numerous cases, if man perished at death.

Yet it is a fact which it is impossible to question, that in the moral world, as far as it comes within human observation, virtuous men are not rewarded nor vicious men punished according to their deserts. On the contrary, if there is no state of retribution after this life is terminated, there are very numerous instances in which it would be far more prudent with a view to one's own happiness, to gratify those appetites (be they what they may) which a man thinks will afford him the greatest amount of pleasure, rather than to lead a life of painful virtuous self-denial. It is quite true that the fact that suffering is the certain and inevitable result of certain kinds of sin, indicates that the Governor of the world is not wholly indifferent to moral actions ; but whatever indications of this kind exist in the present constitution of things, it is still evident that if man's conscious existence terminates at death, the moral government of the world is of a very imperfect character : for it is absolutely certain that under it the holy are not rewarded, nor the evil punished according to their deserts. Nay, more ; it very frequently happens that astute bad men are far more prosperous than self-sacrificing virtuous ones—a fact which has proved one of the deepest trials to the holy from the earliest dawn of human thought. The simple truth is, that if man perishes at death, the moral

government of the world is a scene of unspeakable confusion ; for, as respects this life only, it is only too obvious that the consummate but successful villain is often far better off than the most self-sacrificing saint : for during life the one has had nothing but prosperity and the other nothing but painful self-denial, in many instances terminated by a torturing death ; yet if it be true that man perishes with the body, after life's brief day, both alike will sleep the same sleep of unconsciousness.

It follows, therefore, if the Governor of the world be a moral being, that what we call death cannot be the destruction of our conscious existence, but that we shall pass into one in which the present moral government of the world will receive its vindication. But if, on the contrary, there will be no future state of retribution, in which it will be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, no such vindication will be possible. In that case the old saying will be justified, in a sense far wider than its author originally contemplated, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." That is to say, let each of us pursue the course which he thinks most conducive to his own happiness, or which is most suited to his own tastes (be it what it may) during life's brief day ; for, when life has become a burden, modern science will enable us to bring it to an easy termination, and after death it will be alike to the sinner and the saint, viz. a sleep from which there will be no awakening, and which will not be disturbed even by a dream.

If then man perishes with his body, what, I ask, becomes of a righteous government of God ? It is certain that if he does so, it must be confined to this life alone ; and that after death the righteous have nothing to hope for, nor the wicked to fear. What, then, is the inevitable conclusion ? I answer, that a righteous moral government does not exist. Let me illustrate my meaning by an example which will be beyond

dispute. That St. Paul was one of the most self-sacrificing of men for what he believed to be the good of others, will not be denied even by unbelievers. I take him as an example, because from reverence I forbear to name the name of one who was greater than he, and whom the apostle confessed that he only imperfectly imitated. What then was his opinion on the point we are considering? I will use his own words: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." "If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me? If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." On the other hand, it is hardly to be questioned that Fouché was one of the most atrocious villains (and they were many) of the most dismal period of the great French Revolution. Yet what were the respective fates of these two men? While the former spent a life of incessant labour, in the midst of almost incessant suffering for what he believed to be the good of others, and finally perished by the executioner's axe, the latter, by his wonderful astuteness, escaped from the calamities which engulfed his fellows in iniquity, rose from one office to another, betrayed each party in turn whom he professed to serve, became the prime minister of him whose brother he had aided to murder, and, finally, died quietly in his bed, surrounded with riches and honours. Yet, if this life is the end of man's conscious existence, who would not say that Fouché was the prudent man and the apostle a foolish enthusiast?

It may be urged that in the estimation of the sufferings of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked, I have failed to take into account the pleasure which is derived from an approving conscience and the sufferings which result from a condemning one. To this I reply that, in the case of the self-sacrificing saint, the sufferings have frequently been fearfully real, and that no approbation of conscience (I am

speaking of conscience as it is understood by unbelievers) can metamorphose scourging and crucifixion into happiness. On the other hand, I think that the sufferings which conscience inflicts on the prosperous evil-doer are generally overrated, especially if the sinner is convinced that he has nothing to fear beyond the grave. Further, in men prone to evil, it is comparatively easy to quiet its remonstrances ; and in proportion as they are disregarded, they become weaker and weaker, until in men utterly abandoned, they cease altogether, and conscience becomes as it were extinct. Moreover, the approbation or disapprobation of conscience, whether strong or weak, is only cognisant by the individual, and therefore it can only exert a vague influence on others. Thus it would be to little purpose to say to one who was meditating an act of wrong, who believed that no consequences would follow for his wrong-doing beyond the grave, If you pursue that evil course, you will suffer from the stings of an evil conscience, which will render your life miserable. He would naturally reply, "I see no evidence that conscience makes wrong-doers miserable. It may be so in a few cases ; but there are at least nine hundred and ninety-nine chances out of a thousand in my favour." Butler justly says that conscience, "if it had might, as it has right, would govern the world ;" but its might being limited, it exerts a comparatively limited influence on the conduct of the majority. If wicked men are to be deterred from sin, some more powerful influence must be brought to bear on them than the fear of an accusing conscience, whose accusations will cease when at death man ceases to exist.

But the consequences of the belief that the death of the body is the final extinction of the man are so serious that they afford a very strong reason for concluding that the belief itself is not true. The facts of the moral world being as they are, the disbelief in a future state of retribution is

equivalent to the denial of a God who is its moral Governor, and of a moral law which is based on His character and perfections. Hence it follows that the only basis on which a moral system can be erected is the desire which we each feel to realise our own happiness. This being so, it follows that right actions are those which effect this, and wrong ones those which fail to do so. Consequently virtuous and vicious actions resolve themselves into a calculation of consequences ; *i.e.* a virtuous man is a good calculator of the consequences of actions and a vicious man a bad one. But such a calculation is an extremely complicated one, for not only do judgments differ widely as to what pursuits will realise our own greatest happiness, but even if this can be determined by accurate calculation, there will remain a wide difference of opinion as to the means by which this can be best realised in the very uncertain contingencies of the future. Thus a man whose tastes are elevated will affirm that man's greatest happiness will be best attained by an ardent pursuit of the higher culture of life ; another, in whom the animal instincts are predominant (and these form the overwhelming majority of mankind), will give it as his opinion that the shortest road to happiness amidst the uncertain contingencies of life is the best, *viz.* to throw oneself into the pursuit of sensual gratification. Who, then, shall decide ? It is evident that the attempt to settle the question involves a calculation of so complicated a character that it transcends the powers of ordinary men and women. Consequently the line of conduct which will best promote our happiness resolves itself into a question of individual taste ; and the vicious man may justly urge in his vindication, that considering the shortness of life and the uncertainty of its duration, the most certain mode of realising his own greatest happiness is the most obvious one—*viz.* the gratification of whatever instincts and passions predominate in him ; and if in doing so he should violate

the laws of society, (which are nothing but the laws which have been imposed by the strong on the weak), and thereby incur their penalties, his right course is to evade them to the utmost of his power by subtlety and craft.

To this it will be replied, that the most certain mode of realising one's own happiness is to devote oneself to the realisation of the greatest happiness of others. This principle forms the foundation of that system of moral teaching which is so loudly trumpeted at the present day under the imposing designation of Altruism ; but when examined, it is neither more nor less than the old commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," stripped of all the moral and spiritual power which the great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength," and which the principles of Christianity impart to it, which alone are able to enable it to become a regulating principle in human life. But to the affirmation that the best way to realise our individual happiness is to give up the pursuit of everything which terminates in self, and to seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the reply is a very obvious one. How do you know this, if man perishes at death; for to say the least of it, appearances are greatly against you? It is all very well for you to tell me that it is very noble to do this, or that at some distant period of the future mankind will be greatly elevated by the self-sacrifice of others and myself for the benefit of future generations. But what will this elevated state of future generations profit me when my personal conscious existence has ceased to be? You promise me that I shall live in the memory of others, or perhaps suggest that some portion of my present body will enter into the composition of some exalted being of the future after the lapse of ages of evolution, and you tell me that the thought of this ought to be an ample compensation for all the acts of self-denial and suffering to which you invite me

REASONS INDEPENDENT OF REVELATION.

in the work of doing good to others. · But I ask, what is all this to me after I have ceased to exist as a conscious being? Promises of this kind are neither more nor less than the administration of a little flattery to my vanity, a hundred pounds of which are not worth a few ounces of real present enjoyment, from whatever source derived.

But further I ask, how is it possible to get this principle of altruism into operation? Man is naturally a selfish being. Having got rid of all the moral power which a belief in God as the moral Governor of the universe, Christianity, and a future state supply, what is the moral force which you possess that is capable of overbearing man's natural love of those pleasures which terminate in self, and of converting his natural selfishness into the altruistic love of others? The only possible answer is, that man will become wiser and better through a gradual process of evolution, aided by the self-sacrifice of numberless future generations for the good of others more future still. To this the answer is obvious. Your assertion is destitute of proof. Your principle of evolution means not the survival of the fittest, but the survival of the strongest. Will it be pretended that the strongest are the morally fittest to survive? Who were the fittest to survive, Socrates, or his accusers and judges; the Christian saints, or their persecutors who cast them to the lions; the inquisitor, with his apparatus of torture, or those who perished under his torturing hand? The truth is, the mild and benevolent virtues have no chance of survival in the struggle for existence against the fierce passions of such men. But further, the theory which affirms that the natural course of evolution necessarily leads to the production of the nobler and the better, when applied to man breaks down against the facts of authentic history. What, I ask, has been the effect of three thousand years of evolution on the Negro race? Has the present Hindoo race attained any appreciable degree of moral

elevation above their ancestors three thousand years ago ? Which is the more elevated character, the modern or the ancient Greek ; the Roman of the growth of the republic, or the Roman of the fall of the empire ; the ancient Egyptian, or the modern Copt ? Has the progress of the Chinese been one of gradual moral elevation ? Is the modern Arab an improvement on the ancient one ? If the races in whose veins flow some mixture of Aryan blood are instances of an evolution upwards, most of those above referred to are instances of an evolution downwards. The prospect that mankind will gradually become more and more elevated, wiser, and better through the action of the principle of evolution, as it has been propounded by modern unbelievers, derives little encouragement from the facts of authentic history ; in other words, it is a theory destitute of proof.

But the theory in question lies open to an objection which is absolutely fatal. It is impossible to prove on the principles of Atheistic, Pantheistic, and Agnostic systems of philosophy, that the sacrifice of oneself for the good of others is a duty, for these systems evaporate the idea of duty of all meaning. I ask, To whom is this duty due ? If to myself, it resolves itself into the pursuit of one's greatest happiness. If to others, what right have they to claim it on the principles of these philosophies ? Consequently a moral law, speaking with authority and saying to man, You ought to do this, it is your duty to do that, becomes an impossibility. What, I ask, does "ought" mean in such a case ? Not that there is a moral obligation on you to do so, but you owe it to your own happiness so to do. What means duty ? That you owe it to future generations so to do. Full well may it be asked, "What are future generations to me, after my personal self-conscious being has been swallowed up in the immensity of things ? "

The above considerations, therefore, prove that if death

involves the termination of our conscious existence, this world is devoid of a righteous moral Governor, or in other words that the moral world is a chaos and not a cosmos.

On the other hand, it follows as a necessary consequence that if there is a righteous moral Governor of the world there must be a state of things beyond the grave in which man will continue to exist as a personal conscious being, and where the present inequalities of the moral government of the world will not only be redressed, but will be shown to have been in harmony with the justice and benevolence of God.

Such then are the grounds which reason furnishes for believing in man's personal existence after death. It will be objected that they do not amount to demonstrations. It will be readily conceded that they are not demonstrations in the sense in which that term is employed either by mathematicians or scientists. But there are other kinds of evidence though not demonstrative in the strict scientific sense, which leave no doubt in any rational mind. For example, in the administration of justice a man is often convicted of crime on evidence which no mathematician or scientist would call demonstrative ; yet who, from want of evidence of this kind, would say that the fact was not proved when it amounts to a moral certainty ? Demonstrative evidence is not to be had in the ordinary affairs of life, and if men were to forbear acting until they could get it, the business of the world would be brought to a standstill. I submit, therefore, that the four reasons above adduced, although they are not demonstrations in a scientific sense, whether taken separately or together, are such as to leave no doubt in a rational mind that man will survive the stroke of death. Of these the last amounts to a moral certainty, while the others amount to a very high degree of probability.

It is a remarkable fact that while the question of man's

survival formed one of the chief subjects of discussion among the ancient philosophers, the three last of the arguments we have considered seem never to have attracted their attention. The reason of this is obvious. They rest on the belief that a personal God exists, who is all-powerful and all-wise, and the righteous moral Governor of the universe. On this subject the views of the ancient philosophers were extremely hazy. Very few recognised the First Cause of the universe as a moral being, or had a firm belief in the unity of the Godhead ; nor did the phenomena of the moral world afford proof that it was under the government of a righteous moral Governor. This being so, they were unable to make use of the above arguments, and were compelled to rely on those derived from the supposed metaphysical nature of the soul. Of all the philosophers of the ancient world, Socrates was the one who clung most strongly to the belief that man would not perish with the body, and that there would be a state of retribution, in which it would be well with the righteous ; but when we read his arguments for this belief, as they are set forth in the "Phædo," and elsewhere, we immediately become sensible of their inherent weakness. He himself confesses that they only suggested a hope, and were far from amounting to a moral certainty. This being so, the position which he takes is that death would either be a perpetual sleep, undisturbed even by a dream, or that it would introduce him to the society of the good gods and of the heroes and philosophers of his race, with the latter of whom he would, without let or hindrance, be able to discuss the subjects which his judges refused to permit him to discuss here. Speaking generally, the views of those philosophers who argued most strongly that men would survive the death of the body, amounted only to a vague hope, and never reached to such a conviction as could exert a powerful influence on conduct. Consequently the moral power which such a belief was capable of

exerting was extremely small, and the subject was far more interesting as affording matter for philosophical discussion than as having a direct bearing on the realities of life. The reason of this is clear. The evidence for a future state is inconclusive, except on the assumption of the existence of a personal God, who is the all-wise Creator and the righteous moral Governor of the world.

On the other hand, the popular ideas of the ancient world on this subject assumed the existence of an underworld which was the abode of the spirits of the dead, but ideas respecting their condition there were vague in the extreme. Impious offenders against the gods were believed to be punished in a department of it called Tartarus, and according to some of the later poets those who had lived pure and holy lives rested peacefully in the Elysian fields until the time arrived when fate required that they should pass from these regions of repose, drink the waters of forgetfulness, and animate new bodies in the upper world. But the earlier ideas, which as long as the multitude retained any faith at all continued to be the popular ones, were gloomy in the extreme. The ghost was believed to be a mere shadow of man's former self, devoid of power, and requiring that its recollection should be refreshed by tasting blood. Even mighty heroes passed in Hades an existence compared with which, in their own opinion, the lowest condition in the upper world was preferable. Such ideas, therefore, were incapable of exercising any practical influence on conduct, because while they admitted that the soul survived the stroke of death, they included no belief in the existence of one who, as the righteous Governor of the world, is not indifferent to human conduct, but who will call every individual into judgment for his conduct here, and will reward or punish him according to his works.

I readily admit that the reasons which prove that man will

survive the stroke of death, and that he will be held responsible in the world beyond the grave for his conduct here, are above the appreciation of an overwhelming majority of mankind. Full well might we have expected, when we consider the supreme importance to each individual man of the question whether his condition in the unseen world will be dependent on his conduct here, that this all-important truth would have been made one of those certitudes on which it would have been impossible to have entertained a doubt. But here, as in numerous other instances, our *a priori* ideas as to what ought to be, fail to conduct us to a knowledge of what actually is. Why it is, that the great masses of mankind have been left in such uncertainty on a subject which concerns their deepest interests, is one of those mysteries in the Divine government of the world into which with our limited powers it is impossible to penetrate. We can only say with the Apostle, "The times of this ignorance God overlooked ; but now," having revealed the great truth of the responsibility of man, "he commandeth all men that they should everywhere repent ; inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

In conclusion, let it be observed that none of the above reasonings are adequate to prove the *immortality of man*. All that they really prove is that *his personality will survive the dissolution of his body*. It is generally assumed that reasonings which avail to prove man's survival after death are equally valid to prove his immortality ; or, as it is commonly conceived, that the righteous will continue to exist in happiness and the wicked in misery for evermore. But this is a conclusion which the premisses will not justify. On the contrary, judging by analogy, as disease destroys the body, so sin may be ultimately destructive of the being of the

sinner. The whole question of immortality depends on the will, purposes, and character of God. This the New Testament promises to the righteous, who may safely commit all cares about the future to that God in whom, by abiding in love, they abide, and He in them; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and whose dominion will endure for evermore.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE IMPERFECTION OF THE LIGHT WHICH THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT THROW ON THE CONDITION OF MAN AFTER DEATH.

IN considering this subject it is necessary that the student should never lose sight of the fact that the Old Testament is not a single book, but consists of a number of small treatises, which were composed by not less than fifty writers, who were separated from one another by wide intervals of time, and who derived their materials from various sources of information. As the question of the date of these various writings is one which is greatly debated among critics, it will be impossible to examine them in historical order.

#### I.—THE PENTATEUCH.

We will, therefore, begin with the Pentateuch, although we are fully aware that there are not a few critics who assign to large portions of it a late date; yet even these allow that portions of its contents are unquestionably Mosaic. Taking, then, the Pentateuch as a whole, it is obvious to every reader that not a single passage can be found in it which affirms in so many words that man will survive the stroke of death. All that can be said is, that it contains a few passages from which a belief in a future state may be inferred, but direct affirmations it has none. This absence of all direct reference to the subject is a most remarkable fact, whatever view we may take of its authorship. If the whole

is Mosaic, it follows that Moses, who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, of which wisdom we have the strongest evidence that the doctrine of a future state formed an important portion,\* must have deliberately excluded it from forming one of the sanctions on which his legislation rested. This is equally true if he is the author of only portions of the Pentateuch. If, on the other hand, we concur with those critics who ascribe the authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy to the prophet Jeremiah, then the absence of any direct allusion to this doctrine in this book, as well as in that of the prophet, is the more striking, because the intercourse between Egypt and Judea was considerable, not only in his time, but also in that of Solomon, and the evidence of the Egyptian belief on this subject must have been patent to the eye of every traveller. Further, if we accept the views of those critics who are of opinion that the ritual and sacrificial portions of the Pentateuch were written subsequent to the captivity, the absence in them of any direct allusion to a future state is even more difficult to account for, because long prior to the persecutions of the Syrian Kings, it had become an article of popular belief; and unless the records of the Maccabee martyrs are misleading, they were sustained in the endurance of their terrible sufferings by the hope of a resurrection. Whatever view, therefore, we may take, either of the date or of the authorship of the Pentateuch, the absence from it of any direct reference to a future state of retribution, and the enforcement of its legislation by purely temporal considerations, is a fact the singularity of which cannot be denied.

Although the Pentateuch contains no one single direct

\* The book called "The Ritual of the Dead" was in existence long anterior to the time of Moses, and being learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, it is impossible that he was not acquainted with it. Besides, every mummy case bears witness that a belief in a future state, in some form or other, and even in a judgment to come, was deeply impressed on the national mind.

affirmation that man will survive the stroke of death, a few passages exist in it from which it may be made a matter of inference. Of these by far the most important is that cited by our Lord in his controversy with the Sadducees :

“ I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” “ God,” says he, “ is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Yet all that our Lord here affirms is, that a belief in a future state, or in a resurrection, is a just inference from this Divine declaration. In St. Luke’s record of our Lord’s words there is an intimation that the teaching of the Pentateuch on this subject was obscure ; “ For,” says he, “ that the dead are raised *even Moses showed in the place concerning the bush.*” The words “ even Moses” imply either that the Sadducees would receive no doctrine as true except it could be proved from the Mosaic writings, or else, that although a belief in a future state, or a resurrection, was nowhere directly affirmed in them, yet it might be inferred from the above Divine declaration.

There is also a passage in the story of Balaam and Balak which forms a kind of episode, and is apparently introduced into the narrative from an independent source of information, which contains an apparent reference to a future state. The ungodly prophet is represented as saying, “ May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his.” These words affirm that in the opinion of the speaker it would be better to die the death of the righteous than the death of the wicked, and, consequently, are an expression of a belief on the part of Balaam in a future state of retribution. There is also another passage which, very singular to say, occurs in the midst of the genealogies of the antediluvian patriarchs, from which a similar inference may be drawn :

“ And Enoch walked with God ; and he was not, for God took him.” (Gen. v. 24.)

It is to be remarked that his death is not mentioned, although the death of all the other patriarchs is mentioned ; but if the writer meant to affirm that Enoch was translated to heaven without dying his meaning is very obscurely expressed. Such a passage, occurring as it does in the midst of an antediluvian genealogy, is a very insecure foundation on which to base a general doctrine of retribution.

It follows, therefore, that although it is possible, by the aid of careful reasoning, to infer from a few passages in the Pentateuch that man's conscious existence does not terminate with the death of the body, yet the doctrine of a future state formed no portion of the revelation which God made to Moses ; nor does the book itself contain a single formulated statement, nor a single definite expression of hope or fear respecting it, nor even an attempt to enforce the practice of holiness by a reference to it, or to deter from sin by warning sinners of the consequences with which sin will be attended in the unseen world.

Such are the facts. Rabbi Hermann Adler, in an elaborate essay, has endeavoured to dispute them, but he is unable to adduce a single passage in which the existence of a future state of retribution is definitely affirmed in the Mosaic writings. All that he can do is to draw the inference from certain expressions that such a belief was entertained by a small number of individuals, and at best several of his inferences rest on a very insecure foundation. But between this and the proof that there was any general belief in a doctrine of retribution, which possessed a moral power such as to influence conduct, the distance is great indeed.

To account for the absence of this reference lies outside the limits of the present work. I shall only notice a very singular reason given for it by Mr. White, in his work entitled "Life in Christ." The position taken by him renders

it necessary to prove that man was created mortal, though capable of becoming immortal by eating of the tree of life ; but in consequence of the fall and his expulsion from Paradise, in the condition in which he is now brought into the world, he has lost the hope of immortality. Consequently the belief in immortality, as it was set forth in those theological systems with which Moses came in contact, was nothing better than a pernicious error. Hence the exclusion of all reference to it in the Pentateuch. Yet, surely, if the doctrine of immortality, as it was held by the Egyptians, was untrue, or even dangerous in the form in which it was held by them, it would have been easy to have corrected the errors connected with it, and to have propounded in their place the all-important truth that man's existence will not terminate at death, but that a state of retribution awaits him in the unseen world, in which the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished according to their conduct here. The position in question, therefore, is obviously no adequate account of the phenomena presented by the Pentateuch ; on the contrary, even if we assume that its author was a firm believer that a state of retribution awaited man beyond the grave, the total absence of all direct allusion to it proves that he felt that it could not be urged with any advantage on the consciences of the people for whom he was legislating, and that they could be impressed only by considerations drawn from the present life—considerations which he has set forth in the strongest manner, promising outward prosperity as the reward of obedience, and misery and destruction as the certain consequences of sin.

## II.—HISTORICAL BOOKS.

Let us next examine the testimony of the historical books and of those portions of the prophetic writings which throw light on contemporary beliefs, and the popular ideas respecting a future state of retribution.

Not only is the history almost entirely silent on this subject, but the sanctions by which the messages of the prophets are enforced are based on considerations wholly temporal. Thus the strongest denunciations against wicked monarchs are, that they shall be cut off and all their male posterity, and that their dead bodies should be devoured by dogs. Of this kind of threatenings in the writings of the Old Testament—and they are full of expostulations and threatenings—the strongest are that which the prophet Jeremiah directs against the unrighteous king Jehoiakim, that there should be no lamentation at his death and that he should be buried with the burial of an ass; and that against the rebellious Jews, that Jerusalem and its temple should be destroyed and the people carried captive to Babylon; but never once do any of the prophets refer to a state of retribution after death for the purpose of warning the sinner as to the terrible consequences of sin, or encouraging the saint in his various struggles with the hope of a glorious future beyond the grave. Of the gloomy views which were popularly entertained respecting the condition of man in the unseen world and even participated in by eminent saints, the hymn composed by Hezekiah, after his recovery from his dangerous sickness, affords convincing proof. It is thus reported by Isaiah:—

“The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth.” (Isaiah xxxviii. 18, 19.)

Yet of this eminently pious king the historian writes, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. . . . He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that after him none were like him of all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him.” (2 Kings xviii. 3—5.)

The description in Isaiah of the entrance of the king of Babylon into the underworld, though highly poetical, is no doubt an accurate description of the popular ideas as to the condition of man in Hades. I shall only cite three verses of it—

“Hell,” (*i.e.* hades) “from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming ; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall answer, and say to thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? Art thou become like unto us ? Thy pomp is brought down to hell, *i.e.* Sheol or Hades, and the noise of thy viols ; the worm is spread under thee, and worms cover thee.” (Isa. xiv. 9—11.) The passage, from verse 12 to 20, is a lively description of the lowly state into which the king of Babylon had fallen, and of the insults with which he was received on his entrance into the underworld.

From this description we learn what were the popular ideas respecting the condition of man after death.

1. The existence of an underworld, into which the spirits of men passed at death, was an accepted popular belief.
2. The great ones of the earth were supposed to retain a kind of pre-eminence in it.
3. Their existence, however, was one of which weakness was the most striking characteristic.
4. Their revengeful feelings were capable of being exerted and even gratified at the sight of their oppressor, now become as weak as they and fallen from all his earthly glory.
5. They rejoice that while their bodies were reposing in honoured sepulchres, the body of their oppressor was cast out as a carcass to be trodden under foot.

The condition, therefore, even of kings, in the underworld, was one of very shadowy greatness. The above description bears a striking resemblance to the description of the

same place in Homer, who puts into the mouth of the ghost of Achilles, the great hero of the Iliad, the assertion that the condition of a slave on earth was preferable to his own, although he was a king among the shades. If such, then, was supposed to be the state of existence of kings and heroes, we may conclude that that of the vulgar masses was viewed as far more unenviable. Certain it is, that the idea of a righteous retribution in the region of the dead, except that a great oppressor would be received with jeers and insults at his fallen state, is not even hinted at in this prophetical description. This is the more remarkable when we consider the definiteness of the Egyptian views on this subject, as they are set forth on the monuments and especially as they are described in the "Ritual of the Dead," and that it is hardly possible, remembering the intercourse which existed between the two countries, that they had not penetrated into Judæa.

We must now offer a few observations on that most singular narrative, contained in 1 Sam. xvii., of Saul's dealings with the Witch of Endor, as throwing light on the popular ideas respecting the condition of departed spirits in the underworld. The facts, as they appear in the narrative, may be briefly stated thus:—

1. Impelled by the danger of a great Philistine invasion, Saul had exhausted all the authorised means of consulting God, and had received no answer. In his desperation, therefore, he applied to the witch to raise up Samuel from the underworld.

2. The witch alone is represented as seeing the apparition, for, adds the narrative, "When she saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice;" and on Saul asking her what she saw, she answered, "I see a god coming up out of the earth;" and in reply to a further question, "What form is he of?" she answers, "An old man cometh up, and he is

covered with a robe ; " whereupon the narrative adds, " *Saul perceived that it was Samuel*, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance." On this a dialogue between Saul and Samuel is represented as taking place ; but nowhere is it affirmed that Saul actually saw the apparition.

3. The apparition, designated by the author of the book, " Samuel," is then represented as demanding of Saul, " Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up ? " and on Saul's giving the reason, he proceeds to prophesy the defeat of the Israelites, and that Saul and his sons would be with him on the morrow, on which Saul falls at full length on the earth and there is no strength left in him.

Such are the facts as they are stated in the narrative. It proves that the following were popular beliefs respecting the condition of man after death at the time of the composition of this book :—

1. That the soul did not perish at death but continued to survive in the underworld.

2. That personages such as Samuel existed there in a state of repose. This is proved by the words which Samuel is stated to have addressed to Saul : " Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up ? "

3. That it was a popular belief that the art of necromancy was able by means of its conjurations to bring up a departed spirit from the underworld, even of a prophet so eminent as Samuel.

4. No hint is given, either in this passage, or throughout the Old Testament, that spirits in the underworld were receiving either reward or punishment, according to their deeds done in the body.

If it be asked what are the actual facts which underlay this strange narrative, I answer that, taken simply as it stands, it admits of three alternative suppositions, with any one of which it is consistent.

1. That the spirit of Samuel actually appeared.
2. That the apparition was the devil, who personated Samuel.
3. That the scene was the result of a collusion between the witch and one or more confederates (being analogous to similar feats performed by modern conjurors), which Saul and his companions mistook for a reality.

The objections against the first and second of these alternatives are overwhelming.

1. It is incredible that God should have refused to answer Saul by the authorised means of consulting him, and then have vouchsafed him an answer through the conjurations of a witch, a mode of prying into futurity which the law forbade in the sternest terms, such as, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

To meet this difficulty it has been urged that the apparition of Samuel was unexpected by the witch, and that he was sent by God to announce Saul's destruction as a punishment for having consulted her.

To this the answer is obvious, that there is no hint of this to be found in the narrative. On the contrary, Samuel is represented as complaining that he *had been disquieted* by having been brought up; but surely no holy spirit would speak of having been disquieted if sent by God to deliver His messages to man. If it be urged, as it has been, that the witch's outcry implies that the real Samuel appeared as an unexpected visitor in the midst of her conjurations, and that the witch's cry was occasioned by terror at his appearance, it is quite as probable that it formed part and parcel of the deception which was practised on Saul.

2. If it was the spirit of Samuel which actually appeared, and this without any intimation that he did not appear as the result of the witch's conjurations, but as a messenger from God for the purpose of punishing Saul for his impiety,

nothing could have been better fitted to confirm the popular belief that necromancers possessed the power of summoning at their pleasure departed spirits from the underworld. In a word, it would have confirmed the popular belief in witchcraft.

3. Equally strong are the objections against the assumption that the apparition was the devil, who personated Samuel. What, I ask, would have been the effect of such an apparition, if allowed by God? Evidently it would have been attended with the result of confirming the unhallowed belief that necromancers possessed the power of summoning spirits from the underworld for the purpose of prying into the secrets of the future. Whatever activities may be supposed to be possessed by the evil one, it is incredible that the moral Governor of the world should allow him to enact a scene like this.

It follows, therefore, that the third alternative must be the true one, viz. that the entire scene was a trick practised on Saul and his companions, but one not more wonderful than the feats which are performed by modern conjurors, spiritualists, and practitioners of sleight of hand. The entire narrative, however, is doubtless a sufficiently accurate description of the popular beliefs respecting the condition of departed spirits in Hades at the time when it was composed, and of the power which necromancers were supposed to possess of bringing them up for the purpose of consulting them.

### III.—THE TESTIMONY OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

Although the place assigned to this book in the Hebrew canon is among the Hagiographa, it is necessary to examine its testimony in this place, because the time of its composition extends over the entire range of the history from the time of David until after the return from the captivity, if not to the time of the Maccabees. For our present purpose its

testimony is of the highest value, because it does not consist of a number of abstract or even historical statements, but most of the Psalms are a delineation of the inmost life and the religious experiences of their authors—of their joys and of their sorrows, of their hopes and of their fears. This book is perhaps the most marvellous record of religious experience which exists. Before we enter on the examination of particular Psalms let us consider what is the impression which the book makes on the reader's mind, taken as a whole.

1. The faith of its authors in a living God, His presence in Providence, His attributes of holiness, justice, and mercy, and that His moral government would receive its vindication in the present life, was of a most intense character. We may best describe it in the language of metaphor, by saying it glowed with a white heat, such as we can scarcely conceive of in the present day.

2. Yet while its authors entertained the strongest hope that God would appear for their deliverance under the most disastrous circumstances, even those who are of opinion that a doctrine of a future state is to be found in the Psalms cannot help admitting that it is nowhere directly put forth as the foundation of that hope. In this respect the contrast between this book and any book of hymns, in general use in any section of the Christian Church, is remarkable. In the one the hope of immortality is expressed in terms which cannot be mistaken; in the other it is a matter of inference, and often of uncertain inference. Yet the reader of the Psalms feels instinctively that they are most vivid delineations of the religious experience of their authors, and that here, if in any composition known to man, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth has spoken.

3. The prominent motives which the writers of this book put forth, as a sanction to holiness, and as a deterrent to sin, are that holiness will be attended with prosperity in this life,

and that sin will be attended, notwithstanding present appearances, with adversity and ultimate destruction.

4. Many of the Psalms afford proof that their authors had no definite belief in a future state of existence, in which man's happiness or misery would be dependent on his conduct here ; nay more, some of them are scarcely reconcilable with a belief that the soul survives the death of the body.

5. Respecting the wicked, they are described as destined to perish and to be consumed out of the earth ; but not a word is said about their being punished in the underworld, or that they will be raised to a resurrection of condemnation ; nor do the strongest of the imprecatory Psalmists devote their enemies to anything more terrible than destruction.

Such are the general views of the authors of this most remarkable book respecting a future state. Let us now consider a few specific Psalms, where their authors express a hope that they will enjoy a blissful existence after death, and a few whose authors seemed to have entertained no such expectation.

The conclusion of Psalm xvi. sets forth the brightest hopes for its author beyond the grave. There is nothing equal to it in the entire volume :—

“ I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth ; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*i.e.* Hades] neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou shalt show me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

This Psalm is referred to by St. Peter as Messianic. It is obvious that the Psalmist spoke in it of some one higher than himself, because his flesh certainly saw corruption. Yet from its general import it is hardly possible to draw any

other conclusion than that its author expected to enjoy a blissful existence with God after death.

From Psalm xvii. 15 we may draw a similar conclusion, though the hope is expressed less distinctly. After affirming that the men of the world have their portion in this world, its author writes :—

“ As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness ; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

The conclusion of Psalm xxii. contains a strong affirmation that the person depicted therein will survive his torturing death ; but it is throughout too Messianic to throw light on the belief of its author respecting himself. Still it is a fair inference that he hoped that he might participate in the triumph referred to.

In Psalm xxiii. we have the following affirmation :—

“ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the *shadow of death*,\* I will fear no evil.” This, however, is somewhat qualified by the expressions of the two concluding verses : that a table should be prepared for him in the presence of his enemies, and that goodness and mercy should follow him *all the days of his life*. These words seem to point to a temporal deliverance.

While Psalm xlix. 14 threatens the wicked with a temporal destruction, the 15th verse seems to imply that its author expected to survive the stroke of death :—

“ For God shall redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for he shall receive me.”

In every point of view Psalm lxxiii. is remarkable, as setting forth the writer’s views respecting the condition of the wicked in this life, their ultimate destruction, and the hopes which he entertained respecting himself. The general

\* Is it not “valley of thick darkness”? i.e. one of those Palestinian ravines through which the shepherd had often to lead his sheep, and would be in special danger of attack from wild beasts. The word *tsalmaveth* is doubtful.

prosperity of the wicked in this world was to him a terrible temptation. Thus he writes :—

“ Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” On reflection, however, he came to the conclusion that successful wickedness was often brought to a fearful end ; but the destruction to which the wicked were brought was, as far as appears from the Psalm, a destruction confined to this world only. He then sets before us the hopes and expectations to which he rose after he had overcome the temptations with which the apparent prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the righteous, had assailed him.

“ Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,” says he, “ and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. For lo ! they that are far from thee shall perish ; thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God. I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.”

These are the most important passages in the Psalms, expressing a hope of immortality. A few others may be adduced, but their reference to a future state is less distinct. I therefore need not quote them. We might have expected to find such allusions most frequent and definite in the exilian and post-exilian Psalms, but it is not so, the highest aspirations of their authors being for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the restoration of the temple worship in all their former glory.

The following are expressions of hopelessness :—

Psalm vi. 5 : “ For in death there is no remembrance of thee : in Sheol who shall give thee thanks ? ”

Psalm xxx. 9 : "What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit ? Shall the dust praise thee ? Shall it declare thy truth ?"

The seventy-seventh Psalm is one in which the writer expresses his deep dissatisfaction with the present state of things. This being so, it would naturally have suggested to him a reference to a future state, if he had entertained any definite hopes respecting it. But we find none. So also with the eighty-eighth Psalm. It is pervaded by the darkest gloom ; but instead of referring to a future state in which the inequalities of the present would be corrected, it sets in the blackest night.

"Wilt thou show wonders to the dead ?" says the Psalmist ; "shall they that are deceased arise and praise thee ? Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction ? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, or thy faithfulness in the land of forgetfulness ?"

It is also remarkable that of the Psalms which have been selected to be read at the funeral service of the Church of England, while each of them refers in terms of deep pathos to the shortness of human life, yet neither expresses a hope of man's survival after death ; except it be in a single verse of the thirty-ninth Psalm, where, after bemoaning the shortness and vanity of life, the Psalmist says—

"And now, Lord, what wait I for ? My hope is in thee."

It may be urged that this hope refers to a future state ; but the author of the Psalm concludes by praying for a deliverance from temporal evil. Thus he writes—

"O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength before I go hence, and be no more."

Such are a few examples of the hopes and of the despondency with which the authors of several of the Psalms contemplated the condition of man in the underworld. But the over-

whelming majority of the Psalmists make no reference to a future life, either in the way of hope or fear. It may be urged that the firm confidence which they express in God implies that in the midst of the discouragements of the present they must have been supported by the belief in a future life. Whether this be so or no I shall not inquire, because all that concerns us in this argument is the fact that this hope is nowhere distinctly formulated, although it is evident that we have in these Psalms a vivid delineation of the various religious experiences of their authors. What is particularly remarkable is, that in numerous cases, where some reference to a future state would naturally have suggested itself, we fail to find it. Thus in the thirty-eighth Psalm, to which I have above referred, the sanction of holiness is temporal prosperity, and the reward of evil-doers is destruction ; but even a hint that sin will be attended with terrible consequences in the underworld is wanting. The same remark is true of the entire book.

It may be objected to the correctness of this last statement that a passage in the ninth Psalm affirms that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." But here it must be remembered that the "hell" of the Old Testament is simply the underworld, *i.e.* the habitation of souls when separate from their bodies, and not the hell of popular theology. The descent of the souls of the wicked into the underworld is therefore the natural result of that "rooting out of the earth" with which they are so habitually threatened ; but not one word is said as to any judgment being there executed on the wicked for their conduct here. Even a religious man like Hezekiah, as we have seen above, viewed it as a region devoid of the light of the Divine countenance, dark and gloomy ; and it must not be forgotten that the hymn in which his feelings on this subject are recorded was composed not during his sickness, when he

may be supposed to have been labouring under deep depression of spirits at having his work cut short at an early age, but after his recovery—yet it contains not a single favourable expression respecting his condition after death.

Our general conclusions, therefore, are—

1. That a few of the Psalmists succeeded in penetrating the darkness which, under the Jewish dispensation, hung over the condition of man after death, and entertained a hope, so strong that it may be designated a firm belief, that their spirits would enter after death on a life of close union with and enjoyment of God.

2. That others, while they believed that the soul survived in hades, viewed its condition there as one of weakness and of gloom.

3. That the majority of the Psalmists, who probably represented the popular ideas on this subject, considered that the present life was the only sphere in which Divine Providence would receive its vindication, and that prosperity in this life was the reward of righteousness and adversity was the punishment of sin. They also entertained a strong faith that a time would come when all wicked doers would be rooted out from the city of their God, and even from the earth. Of this state of feeling the thirty-seventh Psalm is a striking illustration. I must ask the reader to read it carefully, as it is too long for quotation.

To the various writers of the Book of Psalms our Lord's saying is strictly applicable, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Their hearts were very full of faith in God and of a desire for holiness. Out of that fulness they have spoken clearly and definitely. The great majority of them looked on prosperity as a sign of God's favour, and on adversity as a sign of His displeasure. On this point also they have spoken very distinctly. Not a few of them thought that the taking vengeance on foes was not only

justifiable, but holy. On this point the expression of their desire for vengeance on their foes, whom they seem to have viewed as the enemies of their God, cannot be mistaken. The expression of their desire for the light and joy of God's countenance, and of their sense of God's constant presence, and of His energy in providence, is equally distinct. But with respect to a future state, while all seem to have viewed the underworld as a region of darkness, some of them entertained a strong hope that God would not leave them for ever in this region of gloom, but would bring them to one where they would have fulness of joy in His presence ; others viewed death with a feeling akin to despair, and not a few looked for the vindication of the justice of God's providences in this present world, without expressing a definite hope or fear respecting the world to come.

One thing, therefore, is certain : there is no formulated doctrine respecting a future state to be found in this book. It contains no promise to the righteous of everlasting life, and no threatening to the wicked of retribution beyond the grave. The utmost that we can find in it is the expression, on the part of some of its authors, of a strong hope, amounting to a faith, that after death there awaited them a conscious enjoyment of God. On the other hand, the wicked are simply threatened with destruction ; but not a hint do we find that they meant by destruction a never-ending existence in torment.

The reader should observe that in estimating the teaching of the Psalms as to a future state of retribution, I have only to do with their affirmations on this subject just as I find them. It is a mistake to import into them the light which Christianity throws on man's existence after death, and then to think that we have found it there. Nor is it less so, by an act of reasoning, to import into them a doctrine of retribution and of a judgment to come, as is done

by many,—to argue, for example, from the strength of the Psalmists' faith in God that they could not have maintained such a trust in Him unless they possessed a firm and definite conviction that a future existence after death awaited them, in which the inequalities of the present state of things would be fully rectified ; for it is evident that although a few of the Psalmists entertained a strong belief that a blessed existence awaited them after death, a definite doctrine of retribution in the unseen world is not contained in this book, and equally certain is it that whatever might have been their individual hopes, they never preached such a doctrine as a deterrent to sin, nor was it a matter of popular belief. Obedience is uniformly enforced by temporal considerations.

#### IV.—THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHETS, AND FIRST THAT OF ISAIAH.

The observations which have been made respecting the Psalms are to a great extent applicable to the prophetic writings. It will be sufficient to refer to a few of their most remarkable utterances on this subject. Of these the one which sets forth the highest hopes respecting the future is the hymn of triumph contained in the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth chapters of the prophet Isaiah. The following passages are the most striking :—

“ And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that is cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He hath swallowed up death for ever ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the reproach of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth ; for the Lord hath spoken it. And (in that day it shall be said), Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him,

and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill," &c. (Isa. xxv. 6—10.)

The same triumphal hymn is continued throughout the twenty-sixth chapter. It begins with the following definite expression of locality:—

“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah.”

It concludes with the following bright anticipation:—

“Thy dead men shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” (Isa. xxvi. 19—21.)

The reader will not require to be informed that the entire hymn is couched in language which is highly poetical, and therefore cannot be understood as if it were simple prose.

First let it be observed that the imagery of the hymn is entirely local. “The feast of fat things” is to be made “in this mountain,” *i.e.* in Jerusalem. In the same place God will destroy the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples, and bestow all its accompanying blessings, among which the prophet speaks of swallowing up death for ever. In the same mountain also will the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place. Also the hymn, continued in chapter xxvi., is to be sung in the land of Judah; and in it the direction is given that the gates, *i.e.* the gates of Jerusalem, should be opened that the righteous nation that keepeth truth may enter in. The remainder, therefore, can

only be viewed as having the same local reference. It is true that in the latter verses we meet with the word "world," which may be said to involve an extension of the prophet's field of vision; but this word is frequently used in Scripture to denote, not the entire globe but some definite locality, and in the immediate context the prophet says, "Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord; thou art glorified; thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land." The imagery of the hymn, therefore, contemplates only the land of Israel with some considerable increase of its territory.

The question, therefore, at once arises, What did the contemporaries of the prophet understand to be the meaning of his utterances? Did they view the resurrection mentioned in them as a national or an individual resurrection? This is the real point at issue, and not what we can see in them with the light of the Gospel shining on them. Some may consider the language of St. Paul conclusive on this subject. He refers to the passage, quoted from the twenty-fifth chapter, as follows:—

"But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. xv. 55.) To this he adds the following words from the prophet Hosea:—"O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" which stand in the Revised Version of the prophet as follows: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction? Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." (Hosea xiii. 14.)

The words cited from Hosea are unquestionably addressed to Israel in its national capacity. Consequently in their primary meaning, and in the immediate view of the prophet, they can only relate to a deliverance from some great national

calamity. The Apostle, therefore, must have cited the passage as one which is capable of a higher and a lower meaning, *i.e.* that while it was used by the prophet in reference to a great national deliverance, yet such was the elevation of its language that it could only attain its full realisation when death should be finally swallowed up in victory at the general resurrection.

There is, therefore, nothing in the hymn which can be viewed as a definite revelation of a resurrection, in which the righteous shall be rewarded and the wicked punished according to their works. On the contrary, all its references are unquestionably local, and therefore prove that what the author expected was a national resurrection, and a realisation of the Theocracy in a perfected form, in which, as we learn from other portions of the prophecy, the rites of Judaism were to continue to be celebrated. The language used is unquestionably in the highest degree ideal and poetic, and therefore it fully justifies the Apostle's application of it as receiving its perfect realisation in the resurrection of the just. What hopes it might have suggested to the contemporaries of the prophet, is quite another question. It is evident that it failed to suggest to Hezekiah any strong expectation of happiness in a world to come.

The latter portion of the prophecy (into the much-disputed question of its date and authorship we shall not enter) abounds with anticipations of a glorious kingdom of God, which was to be established at some period of the future, in which righteousness is to reign triumphant, and from which wickedness is to be rooted out, and in the blessings of which the Gentile nations are to share; and with descriptions of its Messianic king, under the designation of the Servant of Jehovah, who, after having poured out his soul unto death, was to enter on a new and triumphant life. Here the resurrection of the Messiah is unquestionably affirmed, from which

it was open to pious Israelites to draw the inference that they too would be raised to participate in the benefits of His redeeming work. Still this is an inference only, and not a direct affirmation of a resurrection or of a judgment to come.

Further, this latter portion of the prophecy, from the fortieth to the sixty-sixth chapter, abounds with unmistakable allusions to the return of the Jews from Babylon, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, and the restoration of its worship, shortly after which events the glorious anticipations of the prophet were to receive their realisation ; but they contain no direct affirmation respecting a future state or a resurrection. The utmost that can be said of them is that they may have suggested a hope to pious minds that they too would share in the glories of the Messianic kingdom.

The last utterance of the prophet requires a separate notice. After speaking of the glories of the restored Jerusalem and the destruction of its enemies he writes :—

“ And they shall bring [i.e. the Gentile nations] all your brethren out of the nations for an offering unto the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And of them also will I take for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look on the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me : for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched ; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” (Isaiah lxvi. 20—24.)

This, with its context, is a very remarkable utterance. It is evident that it was intended by the prophet to be a description of the Theocracy under the government of its Messianic king.

What, then, was the meaning which the prophet or his contemporaries would naturally attach to the entire passage? I answer that they must have viewed it as a description of a future kingdom of God, clothed in metaphors derived from the current conceptions of the day. This is evident, for its literal realisation involves an impossibility, except by the continual working of hundreds of millions of the most astounding miracles. I allude to the passage which affirms that all flesh shall come up every twenty-eight, and even every seven days, to worship at Jerusalem. This not only involves a worship pre-eminently local, a worship which our Lord has affirmed to be abolished for evermore in the kingdom of God, but a constant travelling to and fro, and the consequent withdrawal of all the inhabitants of the world from their various employments.

Further, it is affirmed that all those who thus come up to Jerusalem to worship shall go forth and look on the carcases of the men who have transgressed against God, whose worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched, and who are to be an abhorring to all flesh. This has been actually understood to mean that the glorified saints shall from time to time be witnesses of and exult in the torments of the damned—an idea which is not only in itself horrible, but utterly unchristian. What, then, does this passage mean?

I answer that its imagery is evidently derived from that of the detested Valley of Gehenna, situated within a short distance of Jerusalem, where the filth and the corpses of criminals were either left to be consumed by worms or by a fire which was kept continually burning to consume the impurities of the city. Into this place, according to the prophetic delinea-

tion, the carcases of those who had transgressed against God were to be thrown, where they would meet with a worm and a fire ever ready to consume them—a fate which in the eyes of the Jews was extremely terrible.

The passage, therefore, neither affirms a future state nor a resurrection. Taken with its context, the utmost that it could have suggested was a hope that the just who had departed this life would yet in some manner, which is not explained, participate in the glories of the kingdom of God, of which Jerusalem, and an enlarged Palestine, would be the last centre, and that the wicked would most ignominiously be destroyed. Nothing is more certain than that it does not teach or even hint at a doctrine of everlasting damnation, or even of punishment after death; for that which the prophet speaks of as destined to be the prey of the worm that shall not die and of the fire that shall not be quenched is not a living body, but a *dead carcase*. Surely by no rational interpretation of the words before us can a carcase mean a living being destined to exist in misery which will never end. It has been usual to interpret the words, "the worm which never dies," as meaning an ever-gnawing conscience; but that this was the thing intended the passage before us gives no hint. Certain it is that carcases are destitute of a conscience.

My general conclusion respecting the book which we have been considering is, that it contains no definitely formulated affirmation respecting a judgment to come, that all its descriptions of the future kingdom of God are deeply tinged with the localism of Judaism, and that while it contains numerous passages which are calculated to produce a hope in the holy that they shall participate in the blessings of this kingdom, even if they died before its manifestation, it consigns the wicked to simple destruction. Still further, so imperfect was the hold which the idea of a terrible retribution awaiting the wicked after death had on the prophet's mind, or on

that of his contemporaries, that although he, with all the other prophets, was a vehement preacher of righteousness, he has never once urged it on the sinner as a deterrent from sin.

#### THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

It is very remarkable that there is no definite allusion to a future state or to a resurrection in this prophecy. The life of the prophet was full of trials, of which he bitterly complains, yet he nowhere consoles himself, like St. Paul, even with a hope that "his light affliction, which was for the moment, worked for him more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." All his warnings addressed to his countrymen (and they are many) are sanctioned by considerations derived from the present life alone. To several of them I have referred already. They present a striking analogy to the ideas which were entertained by the Greeks, who held that for a dead body to be cast out to be devoured by dogs was the greatest calamity which could happen to man. So strong was this feeling, that those who were victorious in battle always granted to the vanquished a truce to enable them to inter their dead, and the refusal of such a truce was considered the greatest of impieties. Similar must have been the views of those whom the prophet addressed ; for, as far as this prophecy affords any evidence of the belief of the prophet's hearers respecting a future state of retribution, it is apparent that they must have attached little weight to reasonings founded on the expectation of a judgment to come, although such reasonings, when urged by St. Paul, were capable of disturbing the conscience of so hardened a sinner as Felix. The prophet also was compelled by his disobedient countrymen to accompany them into Egypt. Yet, although in that country the symbols of a future judgment must have everywhere met their eyes, we meet with no reference to it even in the stern threatenings of his Egyptian discourses. It

has been urged as a reason for this want of reference to a future state of retribution in the prophetical writings, that the Jews are addressed in them not in their individual but in their national capacity, and that judgments can only overtake nations in the present world ; but several of the threatenings which were uttered by this prophet were addressed to individuals. This, therefore, constitutes no adequate account of the silence of so earnest a preacher of righteousness respecting the punishments which await the sinner in the world to come. His silence is a fact, whatever may be its explanation.

#### THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

We have already considered several important passages in this prophecy ; we therefore need not repeat them. Speaking generally, the prophet's promises and threatenings, like those of Jeremiah, are derived from considerations which are limited to the present life. In a few passages, however, an important consideration is added. The sinner is threatened in them not with simple destruction but with "dying in his iniquity;" yet, if death be viewed as the termination of man's conscious being, or if there was no definite belief in a state of retribution in the underworld, it would matter little whether a man dies in his holiness or dies in his sin. At any rate, the expression "shall die in his iniquity" seems to be a threatening to the wicked, not simply of destruction but of retribution for unrepented sin after death, and implies that the prophet was of opinion that the threat in question was capable of exerting some degree of moral power on those against whom it was directed.

The vision of the dry bones has been frequently referred to as a revelation of a resurrection. As it is well known it will be unnecessary to quote it ; I shall therefore only draw attention to the Divine speaker's own explanation of it.

“ Then said he unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel ; behold, they say, Our bones are dried up and our hope is lost ; we are clean cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people ; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come up out of your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land.” (Ezekiel xxxvii. 11—14.)

Nothing can be clearer, therefore, than that this vision was intended to be a promise of a national resurrection from the national ruin of the captivity. The remainder of the chapter also is one continued promise of a national deliverance, and contains no promise of an individual resurrection, or even of a future state of happiness after death.

#### THE MINOR PROPHETS.

The remarks already made as to the place which a doctrine of retribution occupies in the prophet Jeremiah are applicable to the twelve minor prophets. There is no distinct affirmation respecting it in any one of them. Their warnings and their threatenings are addressed to Israel in its national capacity, and are founded on considerations derived from the present life. For repentance is promised national prosperity ; for continued disobedience is threatened national ruin, accompanied with various temporal judgments. While these prophets are one and all earnest preachers of righteousness, they never refer to a future state, either as an encouragement to the suffering righteous or as a terror to the prosperous evildoer. In the prophet Habakkuk is the nearest approach to such a reference, in his affirmation “ The just shall live

by his faith ;" but standing alone as it does, it must be admitted to be a very obscure one. A passage in this prophet's concluding hymn is a remarkable one, and requires notice :—

" For though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength, and he maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and will make me to walk upon mine high places." (Hab. iii. 17—19.)

The entire hymn is couched in language which is highly poetical ; but while it contains expressions of the strongest faith in God, even in the midst of the direst calamities, it is most remarkable that it contains no reference to a future state. We might naturally have expected that such temporal calamities would have suggested to his mind a reference to a world better than the present ; yet all that he says is, that despite of them he will rejoice in the God of his salvation. Its concluding words, " He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and will make me to walk upon mine high places," point rather to a deliverance in this world than to a better state of things in a world to come.

#### V.—THE HAGIOGRAPHA.

We have already considered the Book of Psalms, which was placed by the Jews in this division of their Scriptures. The Book of Proverbs contains an unmistakable reference to a future state. " The wicked," says the writer, " shall be driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death ;" but even here we have no reference to retribution following the wicked in the unseen world, and the

general teaching of the entire book, and the enforcement of its precepts are based almost entirely on considerations of worldly prudence. On the other hand, while the Song of Solomon and the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther contain no reference to a future state, the Books of Daniel and Ecclesiastes contain two very distinct ones. To the latter of these books, however, modern writers are almost unanimous in assigning a very late date, and not a few hold the same opinion respecting portions of the former. The author of the Book of Daniel thus writes :—

“ And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake ; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan. xii. 2, 3.)

Here a future resurrection, which is to include righteous and wicked, but not a universal one, is directly affirmed. The resurrection also is to be a state of retribution ; for some are to rise to everlasting life, in which they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever, while others are to be raised to shame and everlasting contempt ; but what this latter condition means is left indeterminate.

The reference in the Book of Ecclesiastes is also clear, and it is the more remarkable standing out as it does in striking contrast to the general pessimism of the entire book. It is as follows :—

“ This is the end of the matter ; all hath been heard : Fear God, and keep his commandments ; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” (Eccles. xii. 13, 14.)

This constitutes the most definite enunciation of the doc-

trine of a judgment to come which is to be found in the Old Testament.\*

#### THE BOOK OF JOB.

The subject which is discussed in this book has a very intimate bearing on the point under consideration ; in fact, if a state of existence after death, in which the inequalities of God's present providences would be redressed, had been urged by Job in reply to the charges brought against him by his friends, it could not have failed to put them to silence. The question under discussion between Job and his friends may be stated as follows :—

Is suffering a proof that the sufferer is a sinner ? Is prosperity a proof of God's special favour ? In a word, What is the meaning of suffering ? Job's friends urge in the strongest manner that the calamities which had befallen him proved that notwithstanding his professions he was a great sinner, and therefore a great hypocrite. This their position, both in theory and in fact, Job strenuously denies ; he asserts his own integrity in the strongest language, and in words almost irreverent he challenges God to enter into judgment with him on fair and equal terms. Yet he is unable to throw light on the inequalities of providence or the reasons of his present sufferings, and earnestly calls on death to bring them to a termination, and he not unfrequently uses expressions the

\* Since the above was put into type I have read Professor Momerie's work, entitled "Agnosticism." I think that he has proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the doctrine of the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes is, that man's conscious personal existence perishes at death, and that his work really ended with the same words with which it began, "Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity." Chap. xii. 8. This being so, the six concluding verses are an addition by a subsequent writer, who was desirous of expressing dissent from the author's views, and of modifying the intense pessimism of the work in question. It is with satisfaction that I observe that the Professor's views respecting the absence of any firm conviction that a state of retribution awaited man beyond the grave, on the part of the writers of the Old Testament, are in substantial agreement with those set forth in this chapter.

natural meaning of which is, that man's conscious existence perishes at death.

Now it is obvious, when we consider the arguments of the different interlocutors in this drama and the nature of the subject which they discussed, that the doctrine of a future state in which the inequalities of the present state of things would be redressed, really constitutes the all-important factor in this argument ; for unless there is a hereafter for man, it is evident that the moral government of the world is of a very imperfect character.

But if this belief had been firmly held either by Job or his friends, he had simply to reply that the present state of things is a very incomplete display of the Divine government of the world, that there will be a future state in which its apparent inequalities will be redressed, and that the end and purpose of God's present providences can only be seen in the light of the life to come, to have deprived their reasonings of all validity. Full well might he have urged, "It is true that I am a great sufferer, and so have been many other holy men ; but the proper inference from my sufferings is not that I am a great sinner, much less a hypocrite, but that they will be made to conduce to my greater happiness in the world to come." But instead of using this obvious and all-conclusive argument, it is never once referred to, except in one utterance of Job's, of very doubtful interpretation ; while very numerous utterances are put into his mouth whose natural meaning is that man's hopes and sorrows will alike terminate in the grave, and numerous others in which he is represented as earnestly appealing to God for a vindication of his integrity in this life and for a return of his prosperity ; and this the last chapter represents him as actually attaining, his prosperity being doubled.

As far, then, as the discussion between Job and his friends

is concerned, it leaves the point at issue precisely where it found it. Under these circumstances a fifth interlocutor is introduced, who undertakes to throw light on the subject under discussion, and affirms that in his opinion neither the reasoning of Job nor his friends was satisfactory; but throughout his long speech there is not a single reference to a future state of retribution, and he leaves the difficulty unsolved. Whereupon God Himself is represented as appearing in answer to Job's repeated challenges; yet throughout the entire utterance which is attributed to Him there is not a single reference to a future state in which His providences should receive their vindication. Here, if anywhere, we should have expected to have found it, but it is absent. God silences Job, but this is effected by appeals to His works of creation and providence, and by pointing out that they are inscrutable by man.

The following is the state of the argument: With respect to a future state in which the unequal distribution of good and evil which this world presents would be redressed, with the single exception above referred to, Job speaks in the language of despair. No reference is made to it in the speeches which are attributed either to his friends, to Elihu, or even to God Himself. To this silence the single exception is the following utterance of Job, which is thus translated in the text of the Revised Version, with a number of alternative readings in the margin. Probably there is no passage in the Old Testament, the exact meaning of which is more disputed among Hebraists:—

“ Oh that my words were now written ! Oh that they were inscribed in a book ! that with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever ! But I know that my Redeemer liveth [margin, Vindicator, God], and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth [margin, dust] ; and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God

[here the margin presents no less than three alternative readings] ; whom I shall see for myself [margin, on my side] ; and mine eyes shall behold, and not another [margin, as a stranger]. My reins are consumed within me. If ye say, How we will persecute him ! Seeing the root of the matter is found in me ; be ye afraid of the sword : for wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment." (Job xix. 23—29.)

The above, however, are far from exhausting the number of alternative renderings of this passage which have been proposed by learned Hebraists. From this variety of translations the natural inference is that the meaning must be extremely obscure ; and when we consider the number of passages which affirm that there is no hope for man in the grave, and that all the other speakers are silent respecting a future state or a resurrection, even when the requirements of the argument demanded such a reference, it is difficult to imagine that it can be the expression on Job's part of a definite belief in a future resurrection in which all that he now endured would be fully compensated. If he entertained such a belief the remainder of his passionate appeals and arguments are incapable of explanation, as well as the entire want of reference to it on the part of the other interlocutors.

The following are my general conclusions :—

1. The Old Testament does not contain a definite revelation of a future state of retribution awaiting man after death.
2. While the existence of an underworld is presupposed, which was the habitation of departed spirits, the views which were current respecting the condition of its inhabitants were extremely dark and gloomy.
3. A few of the most exalted minds entertained a strong belief that the righteous after death would enter on a state of existence in which they would enjoy a blissful communion with God.

4. The most terrible punishment with which the wicked are threatened is destruction accompanied with a dishonoured burial.

5. The doctrine of a future state of retribution is never urged by the most earnest preachers of righteousness, either as an incentive to holiness or as a deterrent from sin, or as a reason for the patient endurance of present suffering, or as affording a field for the vindication of the inequalities of God's present providences.

I have only to observe, in conclusion, that within a period of a little over two hundred years from the death of Malachi, a belief in a future state, and even of a resurrection, had become so firm in the Maccabean martyrs as to be able to sustain them under the most exquisite tortures, inflicted on them for the purpose of compelling them to renounce their faith. It will be sufficient if I cite the utterances which the author of the Second Book of the Maccabees has put into their mouths in the midst of their torments.

"So when he (the second brother) was at his last gasp, he said, Thou, like a fury, takest us out of this present life ; but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, to everlasting life."

"So when he (the third brother) was ready to die, he said thus : It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him ; as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life."

The mother, who was compelled to stand by and witness the torturing deaths of her seven sons, is represented as saying—

"Doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generations of man, and found out the beginnings of all things, will also of his own mercy give you breath and life again, as you regard not your lives for his sake."

Also, "Fear not the tormentor ; but being worthy of thy

brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again with mercy with thy brethren."

The following is the utterance of the last brother :—

"For our brethren, who have now suffered a short pain, are dead, under God's covenant of everlasting life ; but thou, through the judgment of God, shalt receive just punishment for thy pride."

Such are the hopes respecting a future state, and a resurrection, which are attributed to these martyrs, under tortures which may be well called infernal. We in vain seek for such an expression of faith anywhere in the canonical scriptures of the Old Testament. The words which the author of the Book of Chronicles ascribes to the martyr Zechariah in his dying moments, "The Lord look on it and requite it," are not only devoid of the faith and hope expressed by these martyrs, but they stand in striking contrast to the prayer of him who, in his dying moments, kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus, Receive my spirit . . . Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." On what ground their assurance of faith and hope was founded, or whence it was derived, we know not ; certain it is that it could not have been a mere opinion, or a hope resting on a mere probability, such as that which is attributed to Socrates, but the most powerful of convictions.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE CURRENT THEORIES RESPECTING RETRIBUTION CONTRASTED WITH THE AFFIRMATIONS OF REASON AND REVELATION RESPECTING THE DIVINE CHARACTER AND PERFECTIONS.

It is, as we have seen, a great truth, affirmed alike by reason and revelation, that God is just. Therefore, when He judges the world in righteousness, He will judge each individual man in conformity with his attribute of justice. God is holy; He will, therefore, judge each man in conformity with His attribute of holiness. God is merciful; He will, therefore, judge each in conformity with His attribute of mercy. But all the Divine attributes combine in a harmonious unity in the affirmation that God is love. Thus St. John writes—

“ Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever

shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God. And we know, and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love ; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect in us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment ; because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love ; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment ; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, cannot love God, whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John iv. 7—21.)

I have quoted this passage at length because it proves, beyond the power of contradiction, that in the Apostle's opinion, love in God and love in man are precisely the same in character, and only differ in degree, and puts an end, as far as Scripture is concerned, to that most dangerous position, that love in man may be one thing, and love in God a thing widely differing from our human conception of love. This being so, the same is true of all His other attributes. If then this utterance has a divine authority attached to it, nay, if it is even true, it proves that when God will judge the world in righteousness, He will judge each individual man in conformity with the attributes of justice, holiness, mercy and love, according to our human conceptions of them, and not in conformity with a standard which, for aught we know, may differ widely from those conceptions. This truth is fundamental to our present argument.

Let us now proceed to test the chief theories which have been propounded respecting the principles in accordance with which God will execute judgment hereafter, and which have attained a wide acceptance among different sections of the

Christian Church, by the Divine attributes of justice, holiness, mercy and benevolence, as we have proved them to be affirmed by reason and enunciated by revelation.

I. Those theories which affirm that all those who do not accept a particular form of dogmatic creed will be excluded from salvation.

A large portion of these creeds make affirmations on subjects of a very abstract character, involving a number of the most profound questions respecting the ontology of Deity, the Incarnation, the nature of the Divine decrees, predestination, the mode in which the atonement has been effected, the *modus operandi* of the Divine Spirit in the regeneration and sanctification of man, and various other highly difficult questions, which it will be unnecessary to enumerate. Now the number of those whose mental capacity is such as to enable them to enter on the discussion of such subjects, to grasp the meaning of the propositions in which they are expressed, and to form an opinion of the value of the evidence on which they are alleged to rest, is extremely limited. What then is meant by the affirmation that these are such essential portions of Christianity, that those who cannot receive them will be excluded from salvation? Obviously, that God will punish a large portion of mankind for intellectual defects for which they are irresponsible. To do so is evidently inconsistent with the possibility of ascribing either justice, holiness, mercy, or benevolence to the Creator. It will doubtless be urged that all that is intended by these denunciations is that only those will incur the penalty which they threaten who wilfully, and with full light and knowledge, reject the dogmas in question. But if this is the thing intended, why is not this expressly stated in the creeds in question? For if that is their true meaning, the number of those who thus reject them will be comparatively few.

II. The theory which affirms that every man born into

the world is, in consequence of the sin of Adam, the just subject of God's wrath and damnation.

Such an affirmation means neither more nor less than this, that it is just to punish one man for a sin committed by another, and in the commission of which he had no share. Surely it is unnecessary to offer proof that to do so is absolutely inconsistent with any possible conception of justice, holiness, mercy, or love.

III. Closely akin to the above is the theory which affirms that men are justly punishable for the tendency to evil which they bring with them into the world. That such a tendency to evil is transmitted to each of us from our ancestors is an unquestionable fact; and that evil of all kinds is offensive to God, I firmly believe. But a man is no more responsible for being born with a tendency to moral evil, or with a corrupt nature, than he is for being born blind, or with a tendency to disease. Such a tendency, instead of appealing to the Divine justice for punishment, loudly appeals to the Divine compassion. Our conscience and moral sense would unhesitatingly condemn a human judge who would punish a man for being born a cripple, or with a constitutional tendency to consumption; and what our conscience and moral sense would condemn in a human judge cannot be reconcilable with any possible conception of justice or holiness in God. What His attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and love will cause Him to do with those who die in this condition we will consider in a subsequent chapter.

IV. Closely allied to the conditions of our birth are the conditions of the surroundings into which we are born, and the moral atmosphere which we inhale from our earliest childhood. These conditions, which unquestionably exert a powerful influence on the formation of our characters, have been determined not *by us*, but *for us*. Consequently all theories which represent God as consigning multitudes of

men to everlasting damnation, without taking into consideration and making allowance for the condition of the surroundings into which they were born, are inconsistent with ascribing to Him either justice, holiness, or mercy.

I by no means wish to affirm that men born, with tendencies to evil, into a corrupt moral and spiritual atmosphere, which they habitually inhale from their birth, are totally and absolutely irresponsible for their characters ; but that in estimating the degree of their responsibility, justice demands that these unfavourable conditions of probation should be taken into consideration, and that when justice has pronounced sentence, mercy pleads.

V. The theory which affirms that God has elected a certain portion of mankind to eternal life, and consigned the remainder by a direct decree to everlasting damnation, or by simply passing over the remainder has thus rendered that result inevitable.

This decree of predestination is alleged to be irrespective of all moral characteristics in the predestined. Both those who are fore-ordained to everlasting salvation, and those who are fore-ordained to damnation, are affirmed to be in an equally lost condition ; and the choice is made irrespective of anything good or bad, either in the elect or the non-elect.

Those who propound this theory, in order that they may hide its awfulness from themselves and others, affirm that this choice has been made in conformity with what they euphemistically designate God's *good*, i.e. *holy, pleasure* ; but choice, will, or pleasure, independent of all moral considerations, cannot, in conformity with the affirmations of reason or the teaching of Christianity, be a *holy pleasure* : it is simply pleasure divested of holiness. Under a sense of this, and for the purpose of averting our eyes from the terrible reality, it has been affirmed that this election has been made by God for

the purpose of manifesting His glory, and it has even been said, the glory of His grace. But a glory which is irrespective of all moral considerations is the glory of power only; and power, pure and simple, may be an attribute of an Ahriman. This theory, therefore, is utterly inconsistent with ascribing to God the attributes of either justice, holiness, mercy, or love, as they are affirmed to exist in Him alike by reason and revelation.

VI. Precisely similar are the results which flow from the various modifications of this theory, such, for example, as that Christ died for the sins of the whole world, but that the non-elect, not having received "an effectual calling," will derive no benefit from his atoning work; or that they can partake in its blessings *if they so will*, but that the will in them to do so is and will be ever wanting, and many similar ones, which it is unnecessary to particularise. What, I ask, can be more inconsistent with the conception of a Being who possesses the attributes of either justice, mercy, holiness, or benevolence than to represent Him as having chosen a comparatively small portion of mankind to deliver from the consequences of the fall and of their own transgressions, and as leaving the remainder, who were no more guilty than the elect, though Christ has died for all men, the certain inheritors of everlasting damnation, because they are unable to embrace His atoning work from want of an effectual calling?

But it may be urged, You admit that from one cause or another transmitted evil exists in man. Does not this admission cover the predestinarian theory? I reply, that it is impossible to deny its existence, except by closing our eyes to the most unquestionable facts. We see this daily in the existence of numerous bodily imperfections, and in terrible diseases, which have been transmitted by ancestors more or less remote, and which have been caused on their

part by a violation of physical or moral laws. It is also an undoubted fact that mental and moral diseases are so transmissible, such as madness, imbecility, and even a tendency to drunkenness and other vices. All these, and much more, are unquestionable facts, and if man's existence terminated with the death of the body, they would go far to prove that the moral government of the world was of a very imperfect character. But assuming all these facts to be beyond question, they do not affect our present argument, which is concerned with this, and this only, viz., What are the principles on which God will judge each individual man hereafter? Will He hold men responsible for what they have had no part in doing? This is what the predestinarian theory in every aspect of it affirms that He will do; and this is precisely what reason and revelation concur in affirming that He cannot do, consistently with His attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and benevolence; for to do so would be to deny Himself. Why things are as they are in the present constitution of the world is a question that does not fall within the limits of our present inquiry to investigate. We have simply to take them as they actually exist. What reason and revelation concur in affirming is, that whatever amount of clouds and darkness are round about God's present government of the world, He will ultimately judge each individual man in accordance with His attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and what the New Testament affirms to constitute the essence of His moral being—Love.

VII. The Baptismal Theory. This theory, as I have elsewhere pointed out, modifies the extreme awfulness of the two preceding ones by providing a remedy for the consequences of the fall in the sacrament of baptism, in which those who are baptised receive the grace of regeneration, the pardon of past sins, and such assistance from the Holy Spirit as is necessary to enable them to attain eternal salvation,

unless they abuse it to their own condemnation. While it has received a number of modifications too numerous to particularise, yet such is its general outline. It has the advantage of being far more merciful than the predestinarian theories, because while these leave all but the elect in a condition that is absolutely hopeless, this places everyone who is duly baptised in such a state that it is in his power to attain everlasting salvation, unless through his own fault he neglects to use the means of grace which are provided for him in the Church.

Still it is only the baptised who participate in these benefits, and the unbaptised are left exposed to all the consequences of the fall ; that is to say, to God's wrath and damnation. But these constitute an overwhelming majority of the human race, among whom, according to this theory, when carried out to its logical consequences, are included the virtuous heathen, and even those infants who have died before they have committed actual sin without having received the sacrament of baptism. I am well aware that not a few who hold this theory stumble at these latter consequences, and endeavour to evade them ; yet such are the logical results of the theory. But inasmuch as the overwhelming majority of the human race have lived and died without having had the possibility of receiving the sacrament of baptism, or even of hearing the Gospel, it stands exposed to the same objections as the previous ones, viz. that the fundamental principles on which it is founded, as well as the consequences which flow from them, contradict the attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and love, as they exist in God, according to any conception which we can form of them ; and if our human conceptions of them do not represent the Divine realities, we have nothing to do but to take refuge in the darkness of Agnosticism.

VIII. Very similar in character are those theories which

affirm that it is necessary for salvation that men should pass through certain forms of religious experience, of which what is termed "conversion" may be taken as an example. This word, in the sense in which it is for the most part employed in systematic and popular theology, denotes a change of mind which can be detected by the consciousness. The logical result of such a theory is that it not only excludes from salvation the overwhelming majority of mankind, but even that large number of holy and virtuous men who have not passed through the particular experiences in question.

One form of it which the very wide acceptance of Professor Drummond's work, entitled "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," proves to be extensively popular, requires a separate notice. According to the Professor's theory, man as he is born into the world is, to all intents and purposes, spiritually dead; and just as dead matter has no tendency to grow into living matter, so there is nothing in the natural man which can grow into the spiritual man. This being so, the change of the natural man into the spiritual man can only be effected by a direct act of creative power, similar to that which has been employed in imparting life to dead matter; and not only so, but this operation has to be repeated separately in the case of every individual who becomes a spiritual man. What, I ask, is the net result of this theory? That every man is brought into the world under such conditions (and these conditions have been determined for him and not by him), that he is as dead to everything spiritual as a stone is; and from that state he has no means of deliverance except by a creative act of God, imparting to him spiritual life, in which he is wholly passive. But further, inasmuch as, according to the Professor's view, spiritual life involves an actual knowledge of Jesus Christ, and a spiritual union with him, all non-Christians both have been and are incapable of possessing it; and as none but those who possess

this gift will be inheritors of the future kingdom of God, all who have never heard of Jesus Christ, however earnest seekers after truth they may have been, will be excluded from its blessing. Nothing can be clearer, therefore, than that the effect of this and all similar theories is to exclude from the kingdom of God all but a very select company of the human race. How far such theories are consistent with the character of Him the essence of whose moral being is love, let the reader judge. It is, however, right that I should add that the theory in question is silent as to the ultimate fate of the unconverted, except that, being devoid of spiritual life, they will have no share in the kingdom of God.\*

IX. The popular theories require only a brief notice, as they are mainly composed of modifications of the preceding ones. As I have remarked already, they are for the most part indefinite and vague; but they concur in affirming that this life constitutes the sole period of human probation, and that this life ended, the fate of every individual is fixed for weal or woe throughout the eternity to come. According to them mankind will then, or after the day of judgment, be divided into two classes, the righteous and the wicked, the first of which will pass into a state of everlasting felicity, and the second into one of endless torment. What, however, will constitute the class which is designated the righteous, and what that which is designated the wicked, is variously

\* Among the numerous criticisms of this work I quote the following observations on it in Canon Curteis's "Boyle Lectures" of 1885. "This singular and eloquent book has obtained a great popularity; but every thoughtful reader of its laboured arguments feels tempted to exclaim ere he reaches the ultimate issue, 'Nascitur ridiculus mus.' What, only those immortal who are converted in the Presbyterian sense of the word? It is perfectly easy to make Scripture texts countenance any theory whatever, even the Anglo-Israelite craze. And as the earliest Latin father pointed out 1700 years ago, 'Nihil proficit congressio Scriptarum nisi plane ut aut stomachi quis ineat eversionem aut cerebri,' i.e. "A warfare of Scripture texts sends a man either off his head or off his temper."

defined in accordance with the different systems of theology which are accepted by different sects, without taking into account those conditions of irresponsibility and mixed responsibility above referred to, which so largely enter into the human character. Into these secrets man cannot penetrate, but God's omniscience can. Consequently the rough-and-ready mode of dividing mankind into the two great divisions which popular theology designates the righteous and the wicked, will most inadequately represent the divisions of human character which will be made by Him, whose attributes are omniscience, justice, holiness, mercy, and benevolence.

An illustration will make my meaning plain. Let us suppose—it is no supposition, but a terrible reality—that a child is born with all the transmitted evil which is inherent in two of the most degraded savages, and is brought up in the midst of similar surroundings, the moral atmosphere of which he inhales from his earliest infancy. When he has grown up to manhood he becomes a being who may not be unjustly characterised as possessing some of the worst passions of the fiercest animal, united with not a few of the attributes of a fiend, and in this state of moral and spiritual degradation he lives and dies. How does popular theology dispose of such a man? It consigns to endless torments multitudes who are twenty times less morally degraded. But how will God judge him? He will certainly only hold him responsible for the evil in him which has been self-caused, and not for that which has been due to the conditions of his birth and his surroundings. It is certain that the character of such a savage is utterly opposed to the character of God; and that its possession renders him totally unfit for the society of the holy; but it by no means follows that it will be consistent with the character of Him whose attribute is justice and whose moral being is love, to consign such a man to a condition of never-ending torment.

Let us take another case. According to a system of popular theology which has attained a wide acceptance, a man who has been converted a short time before death, however degraded may have been his past life, at once takes rank among the righteous, and becomes fit to enter on the enjoyments and the employments of the holy. But what about his character? Has it at once become a holy character? Is it suddenly changed, so as to render him fit for the society of the saints? Has his sudden awakening to the evil of his past life generated in him a number of holy affections, or in a moment destroyed the evil ones? We know that in those cases of sudden conversion which are capable of being tested by the results which follow it, sanctification is a gradual process, only imperfectly wrought out after many a painful struggle; and such is the apostolic testimony, as is witnessed by the Epistles. What reason have we therefore for believing that it will be otherwise with a sinner deeply sunk in moral and spiritual corruption, who turns to God an hour before his death? Unless a miracle is wrought in his special case, of which Scripture affords no hint, he will carry with him into the unseen world the character which he has formed here, minus that change in it which takes place at conversion. Can such a character, until it is thoroughly renovated, be fit for the society of the holy or to enter into their enjoyments or employments? Far be from me the idea that God will not receive all such to His mercy, and that He will not provide for them the means of sanctification in the unseen world. All that I am attempting to show is, that the rough-and-ready method which is adopted by popular theology of dividing mankind into the two great divisions above referred to, one of which will at once enter on the enjoyments and the employments of the perfected kingdom of Christ, and the other into a state of torment which will never end, has no standpoint in the character of God as it is

affirmed by reason and as it is disclosed by revelation.\* Vast must be the numbers of the human race who, while they have not died in a state of holiness, or in that state designated conversion, yet have not died in a state irrecoverably evil, or who have died in one not self-caused, which appeals loudly to the Divine compassion. One thing and one only can we affirm with certainty ; that God will judge all such in conformity with His attributes of justice, holiness, mercy and love, and that His omniscience will enable Him to estimate rightly the effects that things for which a man is irresponsible have exerted upon the formation of his character, and on his actions which are the result of that character.

One further illustration of the point under consideration. One man is born with a temper overwhelmingly passionate, another with one so calm that it is not easy to ruffle it. We see this distinction even in infants ; as matter of fact, we are all deeply sensible that the state of our tempers is greatly dependent on the state of our nervous systems. I select violence of temper as an illustration because it is the fruitful

\* It will be objected that several of the parables affirm that mankind will be divided by Christ into the two divisions of the good and the bad ; and consequently that there is no place left for a *tertium quid*, which in the eyes of the all-seeing Judge will not be viewed as irremediably evil, or for a probation after death. To this I answer, that what I am speaking of is the rough-and-ready mode of dividing the whole human race into those two great divisions which is adopted by popular theology. But the language of the parables is far from sustaining the objection in question. Our Lord thus explains the parable of the tares : "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and shall gather out of his kingdom *all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity*, and cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the *righteous* shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This simply affirms that those that are irreclaimably evil will be gathered out of Christ's kingdom and cast into a furnace of fire, *i.e.* will be destroyed by some terrible form of destruction ; and that those who are designated "the righteous" will be immediately received into our Lord's perfected kingdom. These constitute the two extremes of mankind in point of character ; but the parable, like all the other parables, is silent as to what will be the lot of that vast multitude of mankind who lie between them, and who die in a state of mind which unfits them for the enjoyments and the employments of the heavenly world, but yet in whom all goodness is far from being utterly extinct.

source of a variety of crimes. Yet a man who commits a crime under the influence of constitutional violence of temper may, in a moral point of view, be a better man than one on whom temptations to anger exert little or no force. Yet it is impossible to include such characters under either of the two great divisions of the righteous or the irrecoverably wicked, according to the popular conception of them. The passionate man cannot be a holy man, because the inability to conquer the violence of his temper is a proof of either moral or spiritual weakness. Nor can he be ranked among those who are irrecoverably wicked, for I assume that it is only on such that the merciful God will pass a sentence of final condemnation. From this case, therefore (and I have selected it out of a large number of similar ones which will include a vast proportion of mankind), I draw the general conclusion that in the eyes of perfect justice, guided by omniscience, no small number of the human race who have been born under unfavourable conditions of probation may belong to a class which, while it is not holy, is not beyond the power of recovery; and that such, though unfit to enter on the employments and the enjoyments of the perfected kingdom of Christ, may justly make a strong appeal both to the Divine justice and the Divine compassion.

Most of the theories which we have been considering represent the moral character of God not as that of which Jesus Christ is the image, but as one which in almost every respect stands contrasted with it. According to them, the Creator has so planned and conditioned His creative work that the overwhelming majority of the human race, after a brief space of very uncertain temporary enjoyment, will enter on an existence in misery which will never terminate. It has been urged that this is the inevitable result of creating man a free agent, and that the creation of a being who is capable of exercising choice was in itself so desirable as to have justi-

fied the conditioning of things as they are, notwithstanding the unutterable mass of misery which has resulted from so doing, which the Creator must have clearly foreseen. We can only say, that if this is the necessary result of creating men free agents, it is one terrible to contemplate and one which is irreconcilable with any possible conception of one the essence of whose moral being is love. But the true answer to this solution is that of all such necessary results, when affirmed of God, we know nothing.

Still further, while we admit that the predestinarian and other similar theories do not invest the Creator with the attributes of an almighty principle of evil, they make a near approach to it ; for when they are divested of all subterfuges, and hair-splittings, they affirm that God has so conditioned his creative work, as respects mankind, that the final result will be the everlasting felicity of a very small number out of a multitude so vast as to be impossible to realise in thought, and the everlasting misery, or (if we adopt the theory called "conditional immortality") the annihilation of the remainder through a course of painful, and in cases of extreme wickedness, terrible suffering. We admit that this constitution of things cannot be said to be the work of an evil being who is almighty, for such a being would have created man under such conditions that nothing but the greatest amount of misery which is consistent with never-ending existence would have been the fate of all, not only in the unseen world, but in the present. This, however, is obviously not the present constitution of things ; but if that beyond the grave is such as these theories presuppose, it bears a far greater resemblance to the work of a creator who is imperfectly evil than to that of one of whose moral character Jesus Christ is the image and likeness, and of whom He has affirmed that He is kind even to the unthankful and the evil, and has taught that it is our duty to be merciful as our Father also is merciful.

In making these observations, let it not be for one moment supposed that I am insensible to the terrible results which flow from moral evil, whether it be self-caused or transmitted from ancestors. That much of the evil which exists is self-caused I firmly believe, and as such it is justly obnoxious to God's righteous judgment ; but the evil in the individual which is not self-caused appeals loudly to His mercy. Nay more : strict justice is not mercy ; when, therefore, justice has pronounced its sentence mercy pleads, and both the Old and the New Testament affirm, with what we may almost call reiteration, that God is merciful, and that His mercy endures for ever, and extends over all His works. My object has been to point out that the various theories above referred to are entirely inadequate representations of the principles on which God will judge the world in righteousness, *i.e.* in accordance with His attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and love, by that man whom He hath ordained, and whom He has also sent to be the Saviour of the world.

The alternative theories which I have mentioned above will be considered in subsequent portions of this work.

My general conclusion, therefore, is that every theory which has been propounded by the finite intellect of man respecting a future state of retribution which is not based on the principles of eternal justice, and which is also not in conformity with any conception we can form of God's holiness, mercy, and love as they are revealed in the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ is a misrepresentation of the principles on which He will execute judgment hereafter. All that we can venture to affirm is that God, who is possessed of perfect knowledge, will judge each man, not as a mere member of a nation, of a family, or of a race, but as an individual, according to his actions as they have resulted from his character ; and that He will attribute to him responsibility only for that portion of his character which has been self-caused, and has not been

the result of his birth or of his surroundings—in one word, in accordance with the affirmation of the prophet, “The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him; and the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father bear the iniquity of the son;” but each man shall be responsible only for his own sin; and when justice has spoken mercy will plead.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN, AS NARRATED IN THE SECOND AND THIRD CHAPTERS OF GENESIS, IN ITS BEARING ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE VALIDITY OF THE VARIOUS THEORIES WHICH HAVE BEEN ERECTED ON WHAT IS DESIGNATED THE DOCTRINE OF THE FALL EXAMINED AND CONSIDERED.

I HAVE omitted to consider in the fifth chapter the narrative of what is designated "the fall of man," as given in the third chapter of Genesis, because it is a subject of such importance that it requires a separate consideration. For not only has it a most intimate bearing on the subject we are considering, but the theory called "conditional immortality, or life in Christ," is to no inconsiderable extent based on it, and a large portion of the teaching both of systematic and popular theology has been elaborated on the assumption that it constitutes the foundation on which the superstructure of Christianity is erected. As this last point is one of the greatest importance, I will begin by offering on it a few brief observations.

The generally accepted theory on this subject is that Adam, by his act of disobedience to the Divine command forbidding him to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, incurred for himself and his posterity the penalty of what is designated spiritual death, to be followed in due course by natural death, *i.e.* the death of the body, and this by eternal death, which is commonly understood to mean a never-ending existence in torment. Further, it is held that the complicated scheme called the plan of salvation was devised by God for the purpose of remedying the marring

of his original creative plan which the fall occasioned ; that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, including his incarnation, sufferings, death, and resurrection, was intended to be remedial of the terrible consequences which have been entailed on mankind by Adam's transgression, although, according to generally-accepted theories, the remedy has been an imperfect one ; and that His divine mission, but for the fall, would have been unnecessary. The above views are held with modifications too numerous to admit of a separate enumeration here, but the above is a sufficiently accurate statement of the general theological position.

Assuming this theory to be correct, we surely ought to find in the pages of revelation some very definite affirmations that Christianity is erected on the doctrine of the fall as its foundation, and the references to it should be frequent. What, then, are the facts ? I answer—

1. That from the third chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Malachi the fall of man is not once mentioned, or even referred to, by the sacred writers. To this the only apparent exception is Job xxxi. 33, but even this obscure reference disappears in the alternative marginal rendering of the Revised Version.

2. The fall of man is not only never affirmed by our Lord to have been the foundation of His divine mission, but it is not once *directly referred to* by Him in the whole course of His teaching. To this the only apparent exception is a passage in St. John's Gospel which may be viewed as a reference to Genesis iii.

“ Ye,” says our Lord to the unbelieving Jews, “ are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own ; for he is a liar and the father of it.” As the translation of this last

clause is not free from difficulty, the Revisers have given in the margin the following alternative rendering : " When one speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for his father also is a liar." (John viii. 44.)

It is, however, extremely doubtful whether those whom our Lord addressed could have understood this utterance as a reference to Genesis iii., because it contains no intimation that the devil was the tempter; nor can such an intimation be found anywhere in the Old Testament. On the contrary, the tempter is, throughout the whole narrative, affirmed to have been a serpent; and it gives, as a reason why it was able to act the part of a tempter, that "the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." Nor is the serpent once identified with the devil throughout the entire New Testament, except in the Apocalypse; and even St. Paul, though frequently warning those to whom he wrote to beware of the wiles of the devil, designates Eve's tempter as "the serpent." Further, the sentence which is pronounced on the serpent as a punishment for what he had done, though applicable to literal serpents, is inconsistent with what is said of the devil from one end of the Bible to the other. If, therefore, our Lord's hearers had learned to identify the serpent of Genesis iii. with the Satan of the Old Testament, or with the devil (*o διάβολος*) of the New,\* their information must have been derived from some extra-biblical source, for the Old Testament does not contain even a hint that its Satan was the real tempter.

It will, perhaps, be urged that the following passage, in the First Epistle of St. John, is a reference to our Lord's utterance as it is recorded in his Gospel.

\* I say, "with the Satan of the Old Testament or with the devil of the New," because it is evident that the attributes which are attributed to each differ widely. The demons (*τὰ δαιμόνια*) of the New are not even mentioned in the Old.

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that doeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. . . . In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous? . . . Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (1 John iii. 7—15.)

The murder referred to in this passage seems to have been understood by the Evangelist to have been that of Abel, and not of Adam and his posterity.

3. No reference to the fall is to be found either in the Acts of the Apostles, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in those of St. Peter, St. James, St. John, and St. Jude, in nine of St. Paul's Epistles, nor even in the Revelation, except in its identification of the old serpent with the devil; for the war in heaven mentioned in it, between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels, with the casting down of the dragon to the earth, evidently refers to a time long subsequent to the creation of *man*. It will doubtless be urged by those who hold the popular theories on this subject, that all these writings presuppose it, though they do not directly refer to it. To this I answer—

First. It is incredible, if they presuppose it as the foundation on which their teaching rests, that all direct, and even indirect, reference to it should be entirely wanting.

Secondly. In investigating a subject like the present, we have nothing to do with presuppositions and assumptions,

which really mean nothing more nor less than reading into the sacred page, for the purpose of meeting the exigencies of our own theories, what is not to be found therein. By this practice it is easy to make Scripture say anything which the commentator or the reader wishes.

4. The references to the third chapter of Genesis in the remainder of St. Paul's Epistles are four in number, one of which is in the Epistle to the Romans, one in the First and one in the Second to the Corinthians, and one in the First Epistle to Timothy. As it is necessary to ascertain how far these passages bear out the current theories on this subject, I must examine them in detail. I will begin with the least important.

I. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead ; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.)

The references in verses 41—48 to the condition in which man was originally created, having no direct bearing on the doctrine of the fall, I shall consider in a subsequent chapter.

It should be observed that the Revisers have inserted in the margin, at the word "Christ," "the Christ," the definite article being in the Greek, though it is omitted in the Authorised, and in the text of the Revised, Version. It is also inserted in the Greek before the word "Adam," thus running a parallel of antithesis between the natural and the spiritual head of mankind. The passage then simply affirms that like as in the original head of the human race, all die, so in the second head of the human race, all shall be made alive. This utterance may be quoted in favour of the theory of conditional immortality, or of universal salvation ; but it is impossible to get out of it anything analogous to the popular doctrine of the fall, and the consequences thence resulting. On the contrary, it affirms that "*the all*" who die in the Adam will be made alive in the Christ.

II. "For I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity which is toward [Greek, the] Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 3.)

This passage proves nothing either way. All that it affirms is, that a parallelism exists between the two cases, and the reference would have been equally to the point if the Apostle had viewed the narrative in Genesis iii. as allegorical, in the same manner as in the Epistle to the Galatians he has allegorised the narrative of Hagar and Sarah.

III. "I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve ; but the woman, being beguiled, hath fallen into transgression : but she shall be saved through the childbearing, if they continue in faith, and love, and sanctification with sobriety." (1 Tim. ii. 12—15.)

The first part of this passage is a reference to the second narrative of the creation, as given in Genesis ii., which is now almost universally admitted among commentators to have been derived from a different source of information from that contained in Genesis i. The second part is a reference to Genesis iii. and to the fall of man as therein recorded. But the Apostle refers to it only for the purpose of enforcing a simple duty, and makes no attempt to erect upon it a system of theology.

IV. "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin ; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned—for until the law sin was in the world ; but sin is not imputed where there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come. But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace

of God, and the gift of the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift ; for the judgment came of one unto condemnation ; but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification [margin, an act of righteousness]. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one, much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life, through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass, the judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness, the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so, through the obedience of the one, shall the many be made righteous. And the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound ; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly, that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. v. 12—21.)

The improvements in the translation of this passage in the Revised Version are very great, and free it from many of the mistaken inferences which have been deduced from the erroneous renderings of the Authorised, making it clear to the English reader that "*the many*" in the one clause of the Apostle's parallelisms are the same persons as "*the many*" of the other, whereas the Authorised Version leaves it open to the inference that two different sets of persons are referred to. Thus "*the many*" who through the one man's disobedience were constituted sinners, are precisely the same persons as "*the many*" who through the obedience of the one man Jesus Christ were constituted righteous. Notwithstanding these improvements, however, the argument remains sufficiently involved ; but the Revised Version accurately represents its involutions as they exist in the Greek. These are

so great that I think that this passage must have been one of those which the author of the Second Epistle of St. Peter found hard to understand in St. Paul's writings. These obscurities—and they are numerous—must have been the result of his training in the rabbinical schools in which he had been educated, and of the imperfection of the modes of reasoning which were adopted in them; yet there have not been wanting those who have ascribed them to the direct dictation of the Divine Spirit. Surely it is inconceivable that He can be the author of obscurities either in thought or style. One thing should be constantly kept in view by the student of Scripture. Truths which are revealed by God, and truths which are deduced by processes of reasoning, stand on entirely different foundations, the one resting on a Divine testimony, and the other on the validity of the argumentative processes by means of which they have been deduced. Obscurities of statement or imperfections in logical reasoning can only be the result of the mental constitution of the writer.

If, however, we take the above-cited passage as a whole, and avoid entering on its subordinate positions, its general purpose is sufficiently clear, viz. that it was the writer's intention to affirm that the evil which has resulted from Adam's transgression has not only been repaired by the work of Jesus Christ, but that the mischief which has been occasioned by the one stands to the good effected by the other in what is called a ratio of greater inequality, *i.e.* that the work of Jesus Christ has wrought far more good than the transgression of Adam has wrought evil. As this subject is one of great importance, I will briefly set before the reader the most important positions of the Apostle.

1. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and thus death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." The words *ἐφ' ὧ πάντες ἤμαρτον*,

here rendered "for that all sinned," are of very doubtful import.

2. Although sin can only be imputed where there is a known law—*i.e.*, the idea of sin implies the violation of a positive commandment—yet, as a matter of fact, the reign of death has been universal, even over those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, *i.e.*, who have not been violators of a known law: infants, for example, who are incapable of such violation.

3. Adam, as the natural head of the human race, is the figure of Christ as its spiritual head.

4. As through Adam's transgression "the many" (*i.e.* the "all men" of the preceding clause) died, much more does the gift of grace in Jesus Christ abound unto these same many, (*i.e.* all men), by bestowing on them abundance of life.

5. As by Adam's one trespass judgment came upon all men unto condemnation, so by Christ's one act of righteousness the free gift came of many offences unto justification.

6. As through the one man's disobedience the many (*i.e.* all men) were made or constituted sinners, so through the obedience of the one (*i.e.* Christ) the many (*i.e.* all men) shall be constituted righteous.

7. Where sin has abounded grace has much more abounded.

8. As sin has reigned unto death, even so grace shall reign through righteousness (*i.e.* Christ's righteousness) unto eternal life.

Such are the Apostle's affirmations in this remarkable and very difficult passage. One thing respecting them is evident. They bear a far closer resemblance to the theory designated universalism than to the popularly accepted doctrine respecting the consequences of the fall.

What, then, is the conclusion which the above facts justify? I answer that the affirmation that Christianity is *based on* what is commonly designated "the doctrine of the

fall" is destitute of all support in those Scriptures which constitute our only records of revelation. It requires to be read into them before it can be found therein.

Let us now return to the consideration of the narrative in Genesis for the purpose of ascertaining what are its actual affirmations, as distinct from the theories respecting it which have been propounded by theologians for the purpose of making it square with their respective systems. Respecting it there are two theories.

I. That it is a narrative of actual occurrences. This theory is the commonly accepted one.

II. That it is an allegory. This theory has been held by no small number of eminent writers and thinkers of the past and of the present, among whom are the Bishop of London \* and the late Archbishop of Canterbury.†

Before entering on the consideration of the narrative in question, I must remind the reader that it has a most important bearing on our present subject, because the theory known by the name of "conditional immortality," or "life in Christ," is in no small degree based on the assumption that man was created mortal, but capable of immortality by eating of the fruit of the tree of life; that the death threatened to Adam as the penalty of eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was extinction of being on the day of his transgression, which, if it had been strictly executed, would have involved the non-existence of the human race; and that the extension of his life after his transgression, and the existence of the human race, which was contingent on it, formed part of the dispensation of mercy, which culminated in the Incarnation.‡

\* Bampton Lectures, p. 184.

† Lecture delivered at Edinburgh.

‡ On this point Mr. White's able work, entitled "Life in Christ," contains the following singular piece of reasoning. "It follows from this leading principle that the execution of the original curse denounced against the first man did not take effect on the day of his sin, that it was in fact postponed for a thousand years in his own person, and that this postponement, which gave

What, then, does the narrative in Genesis positively affirm respecting the condition in which man was originally created, the fall, and the consequences which have resulted from it ? The first chapter, after giving an account of the creation of the different animal races, describes that of man as follows :—

space for the propagation of a race descended from him, though in the image of his own mortality, was the result of the action of redeeming mercy. Had the sentence of law taken immediate effect, in the deepest of all senses in Adam we all had died. The existence of our race then is a boon beyond the limits of law. We are born, it is true, to a short and evil life : exiles from paradise, we are born into a world smitten with a curse, which cankers half its blessings ; born in the image of a fallen progenitor, by nature 'children of the indignation ;' born under the sentence of dissolution, and in the valley of the shadow of death, where mortality, not penal but natural, has reigned for countless ages over the races that inhabit it—yet assuredly this is an existence far better than none, considered even in relation to the blessings of time, inasmuch as all that a man hath will he give for his life ; but when we consider that the gates of eternal glory open out of this mortal world for repenting sinners, and that by a wise numbering of our days during the period of trial we may obtain immortality, this brief grant of life to the myriads of the earth's population assumes the aspect of a benevolence of which the true dimensions pass knowledge."—P. 118, 119.

It is singular that so acute a reasoner as Mr. White should not have seen the untenability of several of the above positions. Surely it may be urged with no small appearance of reason that if the threatening denounced against Adam and Eve had been executed on the day of their transgression, it would have been a greater act of benevolence than to have brought mankind into existence under the conditions enumerated by Mr. White. But he observes, in proof of his position, "if the threatening had been strictly executed, the human race would never have been born ; yet surely this is an existence better than none, even in relation to the blessings of time." Could not the Creator, I ask, have created another Adam and Eve, to bring mankind into existence under more favourable conditions ? But the position, "Surely this existence is better than none, even in relation to the blessings of time," is of a most questionable character, for such are the terrible sufferings of many that there can be no doubt that if they were convinced that there was no hereafter they would esteem a speedy euthanasia the greatest of blessings. Buddhism is certainly founded on the assumption that our separate conscious existence is far from being a blessing, and its adherents, as Mr. White has observed, include only a little less than one-third of the entire human family. The reference to Satan's observation in the Book of Job, " All that a man hath he will give for his life," is singularly inapt ; for even if it be true, it by no means follows that he will consider existence in a continuous state of suffering a blessing ; but as applied here, the words can only mean that the non-existent, if the proposal were made to them, rather than continue non-existent would prefer to endure the greatest amount of suffering which falls to the lot of man. It is true that Milton's Belial is made to affirm that existence, even in the flames of hell, is better than non-existence ; but in this opinion few will agree with him.

"And God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them, and God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth on the earth."

—Gen. i. 27—29.

All the information, therefore, which this first narrative of Creation gives us respecting the condition in which man was originally created is that he was created in the image of God. Although it gives us no information of what the image of God consisted in, yet it is evidently intended to denote that in man which distinguishes him from the animal races. We may therefore safely infer that it consisted in a moral nature, which the animal races are either wholly destitute of, or possess only in the merest embryo; and those intellectual powers which distinguish him from them. But how far these were developed in Adam, as he was originally created, the narrative says nothing, nor does it furnish any data on which to arrive at any certain conclusion. On the question whether he was created mortal or immortal it is silent, though it would seem not to be an unfair conclusion that a being created in the image of God was not destined to perish with the dissolution of his bodily framework.

But the second narrative of Creation enters into more minute particulars. It tells us that—

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

Then, after describing the planting of the Garden of Eden, and the placing in it of two trees, one designated the tree of life, and the other the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it adds—

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the

Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat ; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

On this follows the account of the creation of woman, in order that she might be a helpmeet for man ; and of her temptation by the serpent to disobey the Divine command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, under the promise that by eating it she and her husband would become as God, to know good and evil. To this temptation the woman yields, and on her tempting her husband to do the same, he yields likewise. The effects produced by eating of the tree of knowledge are thus described :—

" The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto the man, and said, Where art thou ? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself."

The narrative then informs us that the man laid the blame of his yielding to the temptation on the woman whom God had given him for a companion, and the woman on the serpent. On this follows the judgment pronounced on the serpent for tempting the woman to disobey the Divine command.

" Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field ; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life ; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman,

and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise [margin, lie in wait for] thy head, and thou shalt bruise [lie in wait for] his heel."

The sentence on the woman is as follows :—

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception : in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thine husband ; and he shall rule over thee."

And upon the man—

"Because thou hast harkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it ; cursed is the ground for thy sake : in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field ; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

On this follows the account of the expulsion from the garden, and the guarding of access to it, by the placing to the east of the garden cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life, "lest," in the words of the narrative, "the man should put forth his hand, and take also of it, and live for ever."

Such, then, without additions, is the simple narrative as it is contained in Genesis. I need hardly say that upon it, as a foundation, whole mountains of theories have been erected and read into it, as though they were so many Scriptural truths ; and thus it has been made the basis of a number of very complicated systems of theology. This being so, let us now consider what it affirms, leaves unsaid, or denies, first asking the reader to keep in mind the all-important fact that, inasmuch as the narrative of the fall is not once definitely referred to in any Scripture which has been received into the

canon from the date of the compilation of Genesis until St. Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians about A.D. 57—and then only by way of illustration, and not as affording a basis for a system of theology—the Church had nothing to rely upon in the way of an authoritative statement respecting the fall and its consequences, but the natural meaning of the narrative itself, during this long period of time. Putting aside, therefore, all theories and conjectures and poetic imaginations—these last have been very numerous—and looking only at its simple statements, I observe—

1. Portions of the narrative so far favour the theory of conditional immortality, that the words used seem to imply that man was created mortal, but capable of attaining immortality by eating of the fruit of the tree of life.

2. It is impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion respecting the intellectual, moral, and spiritual condition in which man was originally created from the words, “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” The words imply, but yet do not affirm, that man’s body was formed out of those elementary principles of matter of which science teaches us that it is actually composed, and that it was vivified by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, which last act made him become “a living soul.” By these words the writer apparently meant to be understood not only that principle of life which is common to man and the animal, and perhaps the vegetable worlds, but all those phenomena of mind which are common to animals and man, and those which are the peculiar characteristics of man alone. But the words are far too indefinite to enable us to lay down a theory respecting the nature of the intellectual and moral powers with which, prior to all education and experience, he was originally endowed.

3. It is impossible to determine with certainty what mean-

ing the threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," conveyed to Adam. At the time in question Adam's experience of death must have been confined to that of the animal races; though, taking the narrative as it stands, it is doubtful whether he had witnessed even the death of any of them. But assuming that he had, its phenomena would have suggested that the thing threatened was extinction of being. Theologians, however, have been wise above what is written, and have assigned to it three different meanings, according to their respective theories, viz. bodily death, spiritual death, and eternal death—eternal death being popularly understood to mean a never-ending existence in torment, and spiritual death the destruction of every holy feeling towards God, and a nature tainted with moral corruption, and that it was spiritual death alone which, according to the threatening, was to take place, and which actually took place on the day of his transgression. Of these last two meanings the words in question contain no hint. Consequently, if it was intended that they should be so understood by Adam, he must have been informed that such was their intended meaning by a special revelation, respecting which the narrative knows nothing and the entire Old Testament contains not a single hint.

4. It is evident from the narrative that Adam and Eve transgressed the Divine command under the influence of a very slight temptation. From this the inference follows that their moral character must have possessed that immaturity and weakness which all character has before it has been confirmed and strengthened by the discipline of life.

Against this, its obvious meaning, it has been objected, that because it affirms that God saw everything which he had made, and behold it was very good, man must have been created in a very elevated condition both intellectually and morally. But this by no means follows, for the

words "good" and "very good" do not necessarily denote some abstract idea of goodness or perfection, but that the work was very good in relation to the Divine purpose in creation. The affirmation, "And God saw that it was good," is applied to His other creative works; but the words by no means affirm that each of them, taken separately, satisfies the abstract idea of perfection; only that they were good, each in their proper place, in the Divine plan of creation. Thus it is impossible to affirm that the innumerable animal races which devour one another are absolutely good in themselves; yet they may be good in the position which they occupy in a far-reaching creative plan which has not yet received its complete realisation. Theorisers of former times have endeavoured to evade this difficulty by assuming that the devouring character of the animal races has been one of the results of the fall of man; but this has been utterly disproved by the discoveries of science, it being an admitted fact that various animal races have lived by the mutual destruction of one another, and that death reigned among them long prior to the appearance of man on the globe. According to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, experience, trial, and struggling with temptation, of which Adam and Eve, as they were originally created, could have known nothing, are essential to the perfection of human nature. Thus he writes:—

"Though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became to all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. v. 8, 9).

And—

"It became him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through suffering. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. ii. 10, 18).

5. All that the narrative affirms respecting the effects which were produced on Adam and Eve by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is, that the eyes of them both were opened ; that they knew that they were naked, while their nakedness had previously caused in them no feeling of shame ; and that when they heard the voice of God they endeavoured to hide themselves from His presence among the trees of the garden. To this is subsequently added the following change of condition, denoted by the words :—

“ Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.”

Respecting the meaning intended to be conveyed by these words, numerous theories have been propounded. It has even been supposed that this knowledge of good and evil, which made man like God, was an evolution in an upward rather than a fall in a downward direction ; others have suggested that it is a bitter taunt ; but what, in the silence of the narrative and of all Scripture, was the thing intended, we have no means of determining.

6. It is entirely silent respecting the results which popular and even systematic theology have attributed to the fall, viz. the utter corruption of man's moral and spiritual nature, and the transmission of that corruption from Adam to all his descendants.

7. Equally silent is it respecting a covenant made between God and Adam, on the assumption of which such important theories have been erected by certain schools of theologians. Respecting such a covenant the narrative in Genesis gives no hint, and the other Scriptures are equally silent.

8. In like manner, it knows nothing respecting the agency of the devil in the temptation, but on the contrary this is from one end of it to the other attributed to a serpent. It even gives the reason which enabled a serpent to act so strange a part, *i.e.* that “ it was more subtile than any beast

of the field, which the Lord God had made." Moreover, the curse which was pronounced on the tempter is only consistent with the idea that the author of the temptation was a serpent. "Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou *above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.*" While these words are applicable to a serpent, they are utterly inapplicable to the devil, of whose concern in the temptation the narrative gives not a hint.

9. The narrative contains not one word implying that the original threatening of death which was denounced against Adam on the day of his transgression was carried into execution, but much which implies that it was respite. Thus the sentence pronounced on him is a life of toil to enable him to wrest the means of subsistence out of an unfriendly soil, and finally that he should return to the ground out of which he had been taken; and that pronounced on Eve is, that her sorrow and her conception should be multiplied, and that her husband should rule over her.

Such, and no more, is the information which the narrative in Genesis furnishes respecting the fall and its consequences. Let it be observed that this is all the information which the records of revelation give respecting it, until more than half a century after the birth of Jesus Christ, and that even then the allusions to it are not direct but of a very incidental character; and, even including every expression which may be supposed to be a remote reference to it, while the Old Testament is almost, if not entirely, silent with respect to it, those contained in the entire New Testament do not exceed eight in number, and the most important of them simply affirms that an analogy exists between the evil which has resulted to man from Adam's transgression and the good which has been effected by the work of Jesus Christ, the latter standing to the former in a ratio of greater inequality, a result which

differs widely from the theories of popular theology respecting it.

That man is born with innate tendencies to evil and in a great majority of cases into surroundings suited to develop them, is an unquestionable fact, and one which is recognised by several writers of the Old Testament and by every writer of the New ; but respecting the mode in which these tendencies to evil have originated, and the law which regulates the surroundings into which a man is born, both reason and revelation are alike silent. The facts, therefore, we must accept, although we can give no account of their origin. In reality the commonly accepted theories respecting the fall and its consequences afford no explanation of the difficulty for the solution of which they have been propounded, but only remove it one step out of our view ; for if they are accepted as an explanation of the origin of the evil which exists in man, the question opens before us in all its mysterious unanswerableness, How came things to be conditioned so that the corruption introduced into the nature of one man by his own act should be transmitted to his remote descendants ? and how has it come to pass that the devil, if created good, has become the incarnation of everything which is evil ? To questions such as these neither reason nor revelation is capable of giving an answer.

The above observations have been made on the assumption that the third chapter of Genesis is a narrative of actual occurrences, for the purpose of setting before the reader a statement of what it actually affirms, as distinct from what has been read into it to enable it to form a support to the theories of systematic and popular theology. The difficulties involved in it, however, if it is viewed as a narrative of historical facts, are so great that they have induced no small number of theologians in all ages of the Church to arrive at the conclusion that it is an allegory adapted to a childlike

condition of the human mind, and even to compel those who are firm believers in its historical character to assign to different portions of the narrative an allegorical meaning. The reasons which have led to this conclusion may be briefly stated as follows—

1. The fact that throughout the entire narrative the tempter is most definitely affirmed to have been a serpent, and that it contains not a single hint that any other than a serpent was concerned in the temptation.

2. The reason given why the serpent was able to act as tempter, viz. that “he was more subtile than any beast of the field,” proves that the author of the narrative considered an actual serpent to have been the tempter, and that it was his subtlety which enabled him to effect the temptation. Now, although the ancients attributed extreme subtlety to the serpent, the investigations of modern science have proved that there are a large number of animals possessing far more of those qualities which may be designated subtlety than he.

3. The fact that the serpent is represented as speaking with a human voice, and even as capable of reasoning with the woman, is urged as a strong reason for believing that the narrative was not intended to be an account of actual occurrences. It has been urged by those who hold it to be historical, that this ought to have led Eve to infer that it was some evil being who was using the serpent as his instrument, and who was the real author of the temptation. What she knew respecting the existence of evil spirits, or their power of using animals for their evil purposes, we know not; but the excuse which she offers for having yielded to the temptation, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat,” proves that she drew no such inference; and whether she ought to have done so, in her ignorance of good and evil, we have no means of judging.

4. Part of the sentence passed on the serpent implies that it was capable of moving in a position more or less erect. If this is not the thing intended, the words of the curse denounced upon it, "On thy belly shalt thou go all the days of thy life," if the serpent had been in the habit of moving like other serpents, would have had no meaning. But a change from an erect, or a semi-erect motion, to one on the whole length of the body, would have involved a complete change in the anatomical structure of the animal. Yet when we examine the marvellous adaptations of the serpent's spine and the apparatus by means of which its easy movement on the ground is accomplished, we can feel nothing but admiration at the wonderful adjustments by means of which these results are effected, which all point not to the effects of a curse but to benevolent purpose on the part of the Almighty Creator.

5. The second clause of the curse, "Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life," has been urged as leading to a similar conclusion. It seems to have been the general opinion of the ancients that the serpent was capable of feeding on dust. Thus we read in Isaiah, "And dust shall be the serpent's meat." But we now know for certain that although, in consequence of its motion on the ground, a larger quantity of dust may enter into the serpent's mouth than into those of other animals, it is incapable of feeding on it. The idea that it does so is founded on an error.

6. A similar result follows from the concluding portion of the curse, which is as follows—

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman; and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise (or, as the marginal rendering of the Revised Version has it, It shall lie in wait for) thy head, and thou shalt bruise (or, lie in wait for) his heel."

It is urged that the words, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed," although applicable to a literal serpent, are wholly inapplicable to the devil, for the seed spoken of obviously means the natural descendants of each ; yet it is impossible that the devil can be said to have descendants. It is true that "children of the devil" are spoken of in the New Testament, but these are not his natural offspring but evil men having his moral likeness. If on the other hand it be urged, as it has been argued, that by the seed of the woman was meant Christ, and by the seed of the serpent those bearing the moral image of the devil, the threat of putting enmity between them would have been superfluous, for, as the Apostle observes, "There is no concord between Christ and Belial." Besides, it is incredible that the word "seed" should be used in two such widely different senses in the same line.

But further, the words, "It shall bruise (or lie in wait for) thy head, and thou shalt bruise (or lie in wait for) his heel," are a natural mode of speaking of the relations which exist between man and the serpent race ; yet if, as it has been often contended, this bruising or lying in wait for the serpent's head is a prophecy of the victory which Christ has obtained over the devil through his temptation, death, and resurrection, and the bruising or lying in wait for the seed of the woman denotes Christ's sufferings and death brought about by the devil's instigation, then it must be confessed that this prophecy was one the meaning of which no one could have guessed until he was authoritatively informed that such was the thing intended. The enmity of man to the serpent race is no doubt great, owing to the danger of accidentally trampling on and being bitten by it ; but there is no evidence that the serpent is more hostile to man than it is to any animal on which it is capable of feeding.

7. Assuming the obvious meaning of the narrative to be its intended meaning, viz. that the tempter was a serpent capable of reasoning and speaking with human voice, it is impossible to conceive what could have induced such a being to tempt Eve to disobey the command of her Creator. Neither his subtlety nor any endowment which he could have received from God will account for his forming so evil a design. The narrative, however, represents him as acting with the deliberate purpose of seducing Eve. This being so, it presupposes that he had previously become animated with hostile feelings towards God and man. Consequently sin must have entered into the world anterior to the fall. It is therefore not without apparent reason argued that all this has the appearance of allegory or parable rather than a narrative of historic facts.

8. It is also urged that if, according to the generally accepted theory, the tempter was either the devil or an irrational serpent of whom he had taken possession and used as his blind instrument, we encounter in the sentence pronounced on the serpent a moral difficulty which is all but insuperable. The words, "On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life," as has been observed above, are utterly inapplicable to the devil, who, according to St. Peter's metaphorical language, "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," and can only apply to a real serpent. This being so, it follows, if the narrative is intended to be an account of actual occurrences, that judgment was not pronounced on the real criminal, but on a brute of which he had either assumed the likeness or which he had used as the passive instrument of his crime. But to represent the righteous judge of all the earth as punishing an irrational animal and its descendants for an act in which it was a mere passive instrument in the hands of another, is inconsistent with the Divine character as it is affirmed alike by reason and revelation.

Milton, apparently for the purpose of evading this moral difficulty, represents the serpent as incapable of laying the blame on the real perpetrator of the crime, but this rather increases the difficulty than removes it. Did the Omniscient require to be informed what were the real facts?

9. The condition of man in the primeval paradise is described as follows:—"The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree which is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden," &c. "And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."

According to this portion of the narrative the life of man, if he had abstained from eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, would have been that of a cultivator of a well-watered garden, which brought forth all the necessaries of life in rich abundance, and abounded with trees pleasing to the eye. Such a life, however it may be suited to a condition of childlike innocence, is one which is ill fitted to develop the higher powers of man. This is proved by the condition of mankind in all those countries of the world where the necessaries of life can be obtained with little or no exertion. In regions apparently less favoured, which render toil and energetic effort necessary, we find the noblest forms of human character. Even if we assume that Adam was created with the higher faculties only in embryo, yet capable of development, the condition of things in which, according to the narrative, he was originally placed was one ill suited to develop them. In fact, it does not even imply that any provision was made for that purpose. This has induced some to propound the theory that that portion of the sentence which condemned Adam to a life of toil was a blessing

rather than a curse, and consequently that what has been designated the fall was an evolution in an upward rather than a degradation in a downward direction. It is, therefore, argued that this account of the change in the original condition of primeval man presents far more the appearance of parable or allegory than an historic narrative. Further, it is urged that the failure of the attempt to find the river which went out of Eden to water the garden, and "which from thence was parted and became four heads," notwithstanding the minuteness with which it is described, points to a similar conclusion.

I have thus endeavoured to set before the reader an impartial statement of the facts as we read them in the Book of Genesis, and of the references to them in the subsequent portions of the Bible, divested of all theories and conjectures respecting what they have been made to mean to make them square with various systems of systematic and popular theology. I have, therefore, taken the narrative simply as it stands, and as it must have been understood during long ages in the Church, in the absence of any authority in any canonical book assigning to it any other meaning than its natural one, it being, in fact, the only source of information which the Old Testament supplies. But inasmuch as the narrative, if it is received as a statement of actual occurrences, abounds with difficulties of no ordinary character, I have thought it right to set before the reader a brief summary of the reasons which have induced numerous eminent theologians to arrive at the conclusion that the account of the fall as given in the third chapter of Genesis is allegorical, and not intended to be a history of actual occurrences. Which of these views is the correct one the reader must now judge for himself. It only remains for me to observe, whichever of them he adopts, that the various widespread popular theories respecting the condition in which man was

originally created, the nature of his subsequent fall, and the consequences which have resulted from it, must be first read into the narrative before they can be found therein, and that it is impossible on anything which it contains to erect a theory respecting the final destinies of mankind or the nature of the life which awaits them beyond the grave.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GENERAL POSITIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT RESPECTING A FUTURE STATE.

IN this chapter I propose to consider the general affirmations of the New Testament respecting a future state, apart from its special teaching respecting retribution. This last subject will be considered in subsequent chapters.

The most careless reader cannot help being struck by the contrast between the Old and the New Testaments in their teaching respecting the survival of our conscious personality and its condition after death, and especially by the absence of any reference to it in the former as an incentive to holiness and a deterrent from sin, and the habitual use made of it in the latter for that purpose.\* In the one this world is viewed as the region of life and joy, and Hades and death as that of darkness and of gloom. All this in the other is reversed : death loses its terrors ; Hades has ceased to be the land of darkness ; and to those who die in the faith of Christ, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. In

\* I use the words "survival of our conscious personality" for the purpose of keeping clear of various metaphysical and ontological difficulties with which this subject has been needlessly perplexed. To us the practical and all-important question is, Shall *we ourselves* survive the stroke of death with a consciousness that we are the same beings that we have known ourselves to have been during life ; and will our conduct here exert any influence on our condition in the unseen world ? Disquisitions about the soul may be interesting as affording subjects for intellectual discussion ; but the one great question—the only question to us of practical importance—is, Shall I, in my conscious personality, survive the dissolution of my body, and will my conduct here affect my condition hereafter ?

the Old Testament its promises and threatenings are sanctioned by considerations derived from the present life alone ; in the New, they are sanctioned almost exclusively from considerations derived from the life to come. In the Old Testament, continued prosperity is promised as the reward of obedience, and adversity, destruction, and a dis-honoured burial are threatened as the result of disobedience and of sin ; and its most fervent preachers of righteousness, whatever may have been their individual hopes or fears, never enforce their exhortations by considerations drawn from an existence after death. In the New Testament this aspect of things is completely changed. All our hopes and fears are concentrated on the future. Not one word is said of actual prosperity in this life as the reward of obedience. On the contrary, our Lord again and again warns his disciples, that the result of following him, as far as this world is concerned, would be self-denial, suffering, and, not infrequently, persecution and death, in return for which they would receive full compensation in the age to come. St. Paul says expressly, and doubtless as the result of a most trying experience, “ If in this life only we have hope towards Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” Yet he was sustained by the consideration that though “ his outward man was decaying, his inward man was being renewed day by day ; and that his light affliction, which was but for a moment, was working for him more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.” If in the New Testament the comforts of religion are referred to, they are uniformly described as flowing from internal sources and not from external prosperity, of which it contains no promise. On the contrary, our Lord again and again warned his followers against the expectation of it as the result of their adhesion to him, in language similar to the following :—

“ He that loveth his life, loses it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

So numerous are the affirmations in the New Testament of the survival of the conscious personality after death, that it would be superfluous to quote particular passages in proof of it. I say, "survival of the personality," for this is involved in the idea of a resurrection; because if our personality perished at death, a resurrection would not be a restoration of the former personality, but the creation of a new and irresponsible one. It sets forth this truth under two aspects.

1st. That our conscious personality will survive the death of our bodies.

2nd. That at some period of the future it will once more manifest itself in some form of bodily, *i.e.* material organisation.

It is to the last of these that its references are by far the most numerous. It is uniformly connected with the realisation of the idea of the perfected kingdom of God, and as the embodiment of the Christian's highest hopes and aspirations. But with respect to the first, its affirmations, though few, are distinct and clear. The following are the most important:—

1. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

While there can be no doubt that no small portion of the imagery of this parable is taken from the then current popular ideas respecting the nature of the underworld and the condition of the departed in Hades, which is represented as consisting of two regions, separated from one another by a deep gulf, but within sight and hearing of one another, in one of which the righteous are represented as reposing at a feast, and in the other the wicked as tormented in flames; yet after making all allowance for the imagery in which the parable is clothed, it is impossible to understand it otherwise than as intended definitely to affirm that the righteous and the wicked exist in Hades in their conscious personalities, capable of reasoning about the present, and possessing a lively recollection of the past; and that man's personality, when

separate from the body, is capable of activities which, as we are at present constituted, are only capable of being exercised through the aid of our present bodily organism. Further than this the parable does not go. The silence of the New Testament respecting the secrets of the unseen world is elsewhere unbroken throughout its pages. It is therefore incredible that its awful realities should have been intended to be revealed through the imagery of a parable. But while this is so, it is impossible to assign any meaning to it, except on the assumption that the conscious personality after death passes into Hades, and is there held responsible for its conduct here.

## 2. Our Lord's answer to the penitent robber.

"Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom; and he said unto him, verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke xxiii. 42, 43.)

This passage affords a striking illustration of the absurdities of interpretation to which men will have recourse when they have a particular theory to maintain. Those who hold that man's conscious existence ceases at death, and that it will not be renewed until the resurrection, propose to read our Lord's words as follows: "Verily I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise." This strange device has been adopted for the purpose of escaping the inference which common sense suggests, that the affirmation was a promise that the penitent robber should on that very day be with our Lord in paradise, the theory in question requiring that his personal consciousness should be extinct until the resurrection.

We have no means of ascertaining with certainty what were the precise ideas which were entertained by the penitent robber respecting the condition of man after death when he prayed to Jesus to be remembered when He came in His kingdom. Being not a vulgar thief, as the Authorised

Version represents him to have been, but one of those bandits who abounded at the time and afterwards, who rose in insurrection against the Roman government, and who, probably, like Barabbas, in doing so had committed murder, he was doubtless strongly animated with the Messianic expectations of his countrymen. This being so, the ideas of a bandit respecting the unseen would be naturally those then current, and our Lord's reply, if it was to be intelligible to him, would be accommodated to those with which alone he was acquainted.

According to them, paradise was that upper region of Hades, free from darkness and gloom, in which the Old Testament saints reposed as at a feast, and where they rested, according to the imagery of the parable, in Abraham's bosom.\* The promise, therefore, went beyond the prayer, it being a promise not only to be remembered at our Lord's coming in His kingdom, but to be received into this happy region on that very day, immediately after death had released him from his sufferings. It therefore amounts to a direct affirmation of the survival of the conscious personality after the death of the body.

3. The next reference to the condition of man after death is the following passage in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians:—

“ For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle [margin, ‘bodily frame’] be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For, indeed, we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon,

\* The reader will find a full account of the ideas which were entertained about Paradise, and the origin of the word itself, in Smith's “Dictionary of the Bible.”

that what is mortal might be swallowed up of life. Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord ; we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well pleasing to him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in [margin, 'through'] the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. v. 1—10.)

Although the precise meaning which the Apostle intended to convey by the earlier portion of this paragraph is somewhat doubtful, yet the general meaning of his utterance, taken as a whole, is clear. In it he expresses the fullest persuasion that when his bodily frame was dissolved by death, he himself, *i.e.* his conscious personality, would be present with the Lord ; and not only so, but that his presence with Him would involve such a state of felicity that he was willing to be absent from the body in order that he might be present with the Lord. Such hopes and expectations involve the belief that all those mental powers which constituted his personality would continue to exist after death. It is also equally plain that, contrary to every idea which was entertained by ancient philosophers, he considered that an embodied existence of some kind was preferable to a disembodied one. "Not," says he, "that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal might be swallowed up of life." The point on which his opening words leave some doubt is, whether he expected to enter "the house not made with hands" immediately after the dissolution of his present bodily frame, or at some future period, because he elsewhere connects that hope with the coming of Christ.

4. The following is a further expression of St. Paul's belief respecting his condition after death :—

“According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be put to shame ; but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh—if this is the fruit of my work, then what I shall choose I wot not [margin, ‘I do not make known.’] For I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better ; yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake.” (Phil. i. 20—24.)

This passage is a definite expression of the Apostle's belief that the death of his body would occasion no break in his conscious personal existence. Also that that existence after death would be far preferable to his present earthly one, compared with which “to die would be gain.” These affirmations, therefore, render it certain that the Apostle firmly believed that he—not merely his spirit or his soul, but the veritable Paul himself—as soon as he was divested of his present bodily environment, would pass into a state of conscious existence, in which he would be capable of enjoying the presence of his Lord. Such a state of existence involves the survival both of the rational powers and of the spiritual and moral affections.

5. Similar also is the affirmation of St. Peter in the following passage :—

“Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit ; in which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” (1 Peter iii. 18—20.)

So also :—

“ Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them in the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you : who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For unto this end was the gospel ” (margin, the good tidings) “ preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Peter iv. 4—6.)

As this passage conflicts with numerous systems of theology, various have been the attempts to fix on it a meaning other than its natural one. Into the discussion of these I shall enter in a subsequent chapter, when I consider whether there is reason for believing that human probation will be extended beyond the grave ; but for my present purpose I shall assume that the reader who comes to its perusal unfettered by systems, will arrive at the conclusion that, read in its natural sense, it makes the following affirmations :—

1st. That Christ, after he expired on the cross, passed into the underworld, and there preached to the antediluvians.

2nd. That he there announced good tidings even to the dead.

3rd. That in St. Peter’s opinion the conscious personality survived in Hades in such a condition that those who had passed into it were capable of understanding the good news that our Lord announced, and that they were therefore in possession of their intellectual and moral consciousness.

6. The author of the Book of Revelation thus writes :—

“ I saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony that they held ; and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth. And there was given unto them to each one a white robe ; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little while, until

their fellow servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled." (Rev. vi. 9—11.)

This book is a book of symbols, and to this the passage above cited evidently forms no exception, inasmuch as it speaks of bestowing *white robes* on the souls ( $\psi\nu\chi\grave{a}s$ ) which the seer in vision saw under the altar. Yet it is certain that the imagery is founded on the assumption that after the death of their bodies these souls retained their conscious personality, in which they were capable of looking back on the past and forward on the future, and addressing prayers, and even remonstrances to Him whom they address as Master ( $\delta\varepsilon\sigma\pi\otimes\tau\eta\varsigma$ , *i.e.* Lord in its highest sense). This passage also is conclusive against the theory of those who affirm that in the Greek of the New Testament the word  $\psi\nu\chi\grave{i}\jmath$  (soul) does not carry with it the idea of the conscious personality, but only of that life which is extinguished at death. On the language of the New Testament and its alleged psychology, we shall have more to say hereafter.

Also—

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow with them." (Rev. xiv. 13.)

This passage simply affirms that the dead who die in the Lord are happy from the time specified and forward, in a state of rest from their earthly labours. But happiness is impossible without the possession of personal consciousness. It adds that "their works follow them," *i.e.* that their works wrought here follow them in the results which they will exert on their condition of happy rest in the unseen world.

These six passages contain all the information which is furnished by the New Testament respecting the condition of man between death and the resurrection. This silence, to

whatever cause it may be owing, is most remarkable, for we all eagerly desire to penetrate into the secrets of the unseen world. Still, beyond the facts that we shall continue to exist as personal beings, that our conduct here will affect our condition there, and that the saints will enjoy a blissful rest from their labours in the presence of Christ, with the one single exception of 1 Peter iii., this silence is unbroken.\* Yet this silence of the sacred writers could not have been owing to the want of the means of getting information, for St. John's Gospel not only narrates the resurrection of Lazarus after he had been dead four days, but it informs us that at a supper given to our Lord some weeks afterwards, at which several guests were present, of whom the narrative implies that the Apostles were among the number, Lazarus was one of those that sat at the table with Him. Did none of his friends during this interval, or did none of the Apostles, while they were sitting at the table with him, ask him about his experiences in the unseen world? It is incredible, but that numerous questions must have been put to him respecting his condition when absent from the body. Similar opportunities of attaining information on a subject so profoundly interesting must have been possessed by those who conversed with Dorcas, who, between her death and resurrection, must have passed some days in Hades. Yet with the exception of the above passages, respecting the secrets of the unseen world the sacred writers are profoundly silent.

Nor is reason capable of throwing any additional light on this subject. The cause of this is obvious, for we have no data on which to reason. Thus while we know that we are personal beings, we are ignorant as to what constitutes per-

\* The contrast between the silence of the writers of the New Testament respecting the unseen world, and the minute descriptions given of it in the Koran, is very striking. Writers of fiction would most assuredly have had much to say respecting the condition of the departed.

sonality. We know that we are beings possessed of consciousness and free agency; but what consciousness and free agency are in themselves we know nothing. We know that there is a most intimate connection between our conscious personality and our bodily organism, and that they mutually act and re-act on one another; but how the former exists when separated from the latter, whether it is capable of holding any communication with the universe outside ourselves; how the motions of the one are translated into the sensations and thoughts of the other; or what a being who is capable of consciousness and thought is in itself, as distinguished from one which is incapable of either, no effort of our mental powers is able to discover. This being so, in the silence alike of reason and revelation, every theory which has been propounded on this subject rests on no certain or trustworthy foundation. Nor does the supposed psychology of the New Testament furnish us with any data through which, by any exertion of our reasoning powers, we can penetrate into the secrets of the unseen world.

We now come to the most striking position of the New Testament on this subject, viz. its promise of a bodily resurrection as the consummation of the highest hopes and aspirations of man. I understand this promise to mean that a time is coming in the future when the human personality, which has been separated by death from that bodily framework through which alone during its existence here its activities were capable of being manifested, will receive a material organism of a different order and character, which in the case of the holy will be fitted for the exercise of the higher, *i.e.* the rational, spiritual, and moral activities of man, and in which the lower or animal propensities will become extinct. With respect to the wicked, although it affirms their resurrection, it is silent as to the nature of their bodily environment. The striking fact is that it is to a

resurrection and to a judgment following it, as distinct from a condition of happiness or misery of the personality in the underworld, that the hopes of saints and the fears of sinners are uniformly directed by the writers of the New Testament. Of its numerous utterances on this subject, I quote the following as examples :—

“ Marvel not at this ; for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment.” (John v. 28, 29.)

“ For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he render to every man according to his deeds.” (Matt. xvi. 27.)

“ For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep, that ye sorrow not even as the rest that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that are fallen asleep in Jesus shall God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, and are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first ; then we that are alive and are left shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thess. iv. 13—18.)

“ For our citizenship is in heaven ; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.” (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

And still later, shortly before the Apostle's death—

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day, and not to me only, but also to all them that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

It was to the resurrection, then, that the Apostle's hopes were directed as being the consummation of his highest aspirations, even when in the immediate prospect of death, although, as we have seen, he was firmly persuaded that immediately after death he would pass from his earthly tabernacle into the presence of his Lord.

Such is the position which the resurrection holds in the New Testament in relation to a future state. In thus resting the realisation of the highest aspirations of man on the promise of a resurrection instead of on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, or even on its survival after the death of the body, the writers ran counter to the entire course of ancient philosophic thought. Oriental philosophy, and the various systems connected with it, viewed the cessation of personal existence and absorption into the *to παν*—i.e. the sum total of all things, which was the only deity recognised by Pantheism—as the highest object of human desire. It therefore viewed the separate existence of the soul and its union with a material organism—for according to its principles matter was the source whence all evil sprang—as a dire misfortune; and it enforced on its disciples, as the highest duty which they owed to themselves, a most determined effort to release themselves from its thraldom. This some tried to bring about by abstraction and lofty contemplation, and others by torturing the body; but both sought to effect the same result, though by means widely differing.

But while the philosophic schools of the Grecian world, with which Christianity came into more immediate contact, held,

with one or two exceptions, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; yet its professors viewed the body as the soul's prison-house, and they would have considered its future union with a bodily organism, after it had been once liberated from it, as the greatest of calamities. Its present union with the body they viewed as the great obstacle to the attainment of the knowledge of the realities of things, of which knowledge, in its embodied state, it could only contemplate the imperfect shadows, but when liberated from the body the soul would then return to its proper sphere, and would hold communion with eternal truth. Such were the general views of the Platonic schools. The Epicureans and the Sceptics, on the contrary, held that death was the extinction of the entire man, and that after death he had nothing either to hope for or to fear. We need not, therefore, wonder, when St. Paul asserted in the presence of his Athenian audience that God had appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead, that some mocked, and others said, "We will hear thee concerning this matter yet again," and that his converts were few; for the doctrine of a resurrection not only stood in opposition to their entire course of philosophic thought, but had nothing in common with the popular beliefs.

In propounding a doctrine of a future state, in which the personality will again manifest its activities through the instrumentality of a material organism, Christianity has gone far to meet some of the difficulties which have been urged by modern thought, and it may even be said to have gone half way to meet the objections of modern materialistic philosophy. What does this doctrine mean? That the perfection of man does not consist in a condition in which he will exist in a disembodied state, but in one in which he will be united

to a material organism. The vital question is now no longer about the separate existence of the soul, and its powers of thinking and acting in a disembodied state. The endless metaphysics which such subjects involve we need discuss no longer, for that alone which Christianity stands pledged to is the reproduction of the entire man. Who that believes that there is a God who made the universe will venture to assert that such a reproduction is beyond His power, or that He has not the means of maintaining the personality in existence in the interval which will elapse between death and the final and glorious manifestation of the kingdom of Christ ?

Let us now briefly consider its positions respecting the resurrection body.

1. Our Lord affirms that in the resurrection men will neither marry nor be given in marriage ; that they will be equal to the angels ; and that the resurrection body will be no more subject to death. From these assertions we are justified in arriving at the conclusion that our present animal nature will then cease to exist.

2. St. Paul informs us that at the resurrection the body of our humiliation will be fashioned anew, that it may be conformed to the body of Christ's glory. The reader should observe that the Apostle does not call our present body, as the Authorised Version represents him as doing, "a vile body." The Greek is *τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως*, which the Revised Version correctly renders, the body of our humiliation, i.e. a body suited to our condition as animals.\*

\* On this point it will be interesting to refer to an incident told by Miss Whately in connection with the death of her father, the Archbishop of Dublin, in her published biography of him. He had been suffering from an ulcer in his leg, which occasioned him sufferings so severe that he earnestly prayed that he might die. At length his prayer was granted, and the ulcer broke. Shortly before he expired, when from weakness he was scarcely able to speak distinctly, his chaplain read to him his favourite chapter, Rom. viii., and concluded by reading the two verses I have above quoted, from Phil. iii., as they stand in the Authorised

3. While the New Testament implies that our resurrection bodies will in some way be connected with our present bodies, it nowhere affirms that they will consist of the same numerical particles. On the contrary, St. Paul tells us that they will have no closer relation to them than the germ in the seed bears to the future plant. This affirmation of the Apostle frees us from the difficulties which arise from the fact that our present bodies are in such a state of continual flux, that within a comparatively short space of time every particle which composes them is changed. All that the promise of a resurrection demands is, that the personality, which really constitutes the man, should be reinvested with some kind of material organism. It has been urged that it is necessary that the same particular body should be raised, in order that inasmuch as it has formed one complex being with the soul, it should share with it in reward or punishment. But what is the body taken by itself? It is a mere organism, incapable of doing either right or wrong, the mere instrument through which the personality and the animal passions act, being purely passive until it is united with one or more of those principles which in our ignorance of their real nature we designate by the words, life, instinct, soul, mind, or spirit. The particles of matter, therefore, which at different periods of our existence have composed our bodies, have had no responsibility for our actions, and being thus irresponsible, it is a matter of indifference.

Version, in which the words occur, "our vile body." He was understood to say, that he would have the right thing read to him. It was supposed that he meant that he would have the passage read to him in the Greek; but as no Greek Testament could be found in the sick man's chamber, it occurred to the chaplain what it was which had pained the dying man, and going to the bed, he recited the entire passage as I have quoted it above. "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." "That is right," said the archbishop, even when dying from a painful ulcer; "there is nothing vile which God has made."

ence out of what material particles our resurrection bodies will be composed.

4. The same Apostle informs us that the resurrection body will be organised in a wholly different manner from our present earthly ones. Bodies may be organised in different ways suited for the various conditions of life for which they are intended. Thus man's present organism is one suited to the conditions of his present mode of existence ; so also are those of the different classes of animals, as for instance those of beasts, birds, and fishes, which are framed in reference to the conditions of their respective lives. In a similar manner the resurrection body will be fitted to the conditions of the resurrection life. According to his statements, our resurrection bodies, compared with our present bodies, will present the following contrasts :—

1. Our present bodies are subject to decay, disease, and death, and even apart from disease they are so constituted that they will ultimately wear out. From all these things our resurrection bodies will be free ; i.e. they will be so constituted as to be incapable of corruption.

2. Our present bodies are composed of flesh and blood ; by the latter of which their waste is constantly being repaired by means of elements which are introduced into them from our food. Our resurrection bodies will consist of neither ; and will not, therefore, not being subject to waste, stand in need of constant reparation.

3. Our present bodies are comparatively weak, and are easily capable of exhaustion. Our resurrection bodies will be fitted to be the instruments of the most powerful activities of our spiritual, intellectual, and moral being, free from weakness and weariness.

4. Our present bodies are fitted to be the instrumentality through which our animal nature acts. Our resurrection bodies will be fitted to be the instruments of the activities of

the highest faculties of man, the action of which our bodies, as they are at present constituted, hinder and impede ; or, to adopt the language of the Apostle, our present bodies are animal bodies (*ψυχικὰ σώματα*), and connect us with the lower orders of creation ; our resurrection bodies will be spiritual bodies (*πνευμάτικα*), and will connect us with the higher. The respective meanings of *ψυχι*, *ψυχικός*, and *πνευματικός*, we will consider in the next chapter. I shall, therefore, conclude this part of our investigation with quoting the Apostle's final description of the resurrection state—

“ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory ! O death, where is thy sting ! ”

Respecting the employments of the saints in the resurrection state Scripture is silent. All, therefore, that we can learn respecting them is by inference from the description given by St. Paul of the nature of the resurrection body and its adaptation to be the instrument of the being which inhabits it. On this point, therefore, we must rest content with the assurance of our Lord, his Apostle, and the Psalmist—

“ I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”

“ Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be made manifest, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him, even as he is.”

“ In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE TERMINOLOGY, OR THE MEANING OF THE LANGUAGE, EMPLOYED BY THE WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT RESPECTING FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

BEFORE we can enter on an investigation as to what is the teaching of the New Testament respecting a future state of retribution, it will be necessary to consider the general character of the language which is employed by its writers, and the meaning of the terminology which they use respecting it. The English reader is in constant danger, in studying the Authorised Version of the New Testament, of attaching to its terminology the meaning which the English words into which the corresponding Greek ones have been translated bear in popular theology, and thus of reading his own pre-conceived conceptions into the sacred writings. One remarkable instance, out of numerous others, will suffice as an illustration. The Greek word *κρίσις* is not unfrequently translated in the Authorised Version by the English word "damnation." Respecting the precise meaning of this word at the time of the translators there may be some doubt, but it is now popularly understood to mean an existence in never-ending misery. Of such a meaning the Greek word *κρίσις* contains no hint, and the Revisers have done well in having removed the word "damnation" out of the Revised Version, and in rendering this and other kindred terms by the word "judgment," or some similar expression. Our object, therefore, must be to ascertain the meaning which the sacred

writers intended to convey by their terminology, and also that which they knew would be attached to it by those whom they were addressing. This, and not the technical senses which popular theology has attached to their English counterparts is, I contend, their only true meaning. It should be observed, inasmuch as the Epistles of the New Testament are addressed to particular Churches, and obviously with the intention that they should be read to their respective members, that in endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of the terms employed, we must not only consider the peculiar *usus loquendi* of the author, but also the sense which those to whom they were addressed were certain to attach to the terms employed. It is always to be presumed that the writer of a letter uses words in a sense which he knows will be attached to them by his correspondents, *i.e.* in the ordinary meaning of the words, and not in a sense which is peculiar to himself. I make this observation because in expounding St. Paul's epistles importance is often attached to certain expressions in them as having a sense which was peculiar to the Apostle; whereas if he had used words in senses peculiar to himself, he would have meant one thing by them, and those whom he was addressing would have understood another. Writers of letters, unless they wish to be obscure, write in language such as they feel assured will be intelligible to those to whom they write.

The Greek of the New Testament is the vernacular Greek which was spoken in those places which had been Hellenised by the conquests of Alexander the Great, and was in extensive use in no small portion of the Oriental world. This form of Greek was that used by the Jews of the dispersion, and into it the Scriptures of the Old Testament had been translated at least a hundred and fifty years prior to the Advent. It is commonly called Hellenistic Greek, which, in contradistinction to the Greek in ordinary use, may be briefly des-

cribed as Hebrew thought expressed in Greek words. The meaning of the words, however, is the same as that which they bear in ordinary vernacular Greek, unless the context shows that the author intended to use them in a special sense, which was also understood in this special sense by those whom he was addressing. Otherwise the writings would have failed to have conveyed to the latter the meaning intended by the writer. The chief characteristic of this form of Greek is its simplicity of construction, which has rendered the New Testament capable of being nearly literally, yet intelligibly, translated into that multitude of languages in which it now exists; whereas a literal translation of the great classical Greek writers would be almost unintelligible to the ordinary English reader.\*

Its language, with the exception of what are called its Hebraisms, is essentially popular. It contains no scientific or technical terms. The members of the Apostolic Churches were composed for the most part of the trading classes and of slaves, and consisted of Greek-speaking Jews and Gentiles, whose numbers in some churches were evenly balanced, while in others one or other of these elements formed a considerable majority. The Apostolic writings were intended beyond all question to be intelligible to those to whom they were addressed. Thus St. Paul takes it for granted that his epistles would be read publicly in the churches, and in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, he gives special directions that it should be read "to all the holy brethren." He must, therefore, have assumed that the terminology which he employed would have been thoroughly intelligible to the mem-

\* If the reader is curious on this subject, he will find a striking example of what I say in Hobbes's translation of Thucydides. The translation is nearly literal, but the speeches, which are very numerous, are not only very painful reading, but scarcely intelligible to the ordinary reader. The difference in point of intelligibility between them and the most abstract writing in the New Testament is striking.

bers of this Church, the majority of whom consisted of Gentiles who had been converted from heathenism a little over a year prior to the date of the Apostle's letter, and who must have understood his Greek in the sense which it bore in the vernacular.\* A similar observation is true of the other epistles of the Apostle. They were intended to be read publicly in the different Churches. This being so, the Greek in which he wrote them could not have contained a number of technicalities intelligible only to himself and a small body of the members of these churches, but was Greek as it was spoken and understood by the trading and lower classes—for of such the Apostolic Churches were almost exclusively composed—in such places as Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome, Galatia, Philippi, Ephesus, and Colosse. If the Apostle attached a meaning to a word which those whom he addressed did not understand by it, it would have been absolutely necessary for him to have given some intimation of the peculiar sense in which he used it, if he meant his communications to be intelligible.

It is necessary that the nature of the Apostle's terminology should be clearly understood, because it has been assumed that several of the words used respecting future retribution bear a technical sense in the New Testament. Thus, for example, it has been maintained by one side of this controversy that "destruction," and words of similar import must necessarily mean annihilation, and by the other, a never-ending life in torment. All the Greek words thus translated are wide in their signification, like our corresponding English ones; and among their many meanings, the precise one

\* I have made this observation, because the short time which had elapsed between the foundation of this Church and the composition of the Epistle renders it impossible that its terminology could have acquired a special technical sense during so brief an interval. The Epistle itself makes it evident that although this Church was composed partially of Jews, the majority of its members consisted of recently converted Gentiles, whose acquaintance with the Septuagint version of the Old Testament must have been indefinitely small.

which an apostolic writer intended to convey can only be determined by a careful consideration of the context in which it stands, and of the general usage of the word in question. Keeping these observations in view, we will now consider the meaning which the most important words which are used in connection with the subject we are now considering bear in the Apostolic writings.

I. *Πνεῦμα, ψυχὴ, σῶμα*, usually translated, spirit, soul, and body.

A clear apprehension of the various senses in which these words are used by the sacred writers is important, because several attempts have been made, to elaborate a psychology of man on the assumption that they are used by them with something like philosophical precision, and therefore to base certain doctrines connected with this subject on this as a foundation. Of these the best known is the theory called "The tripartite nature of man," which affirms that man (perhaps I should rather say, the regenerate man), is composed of three distinct essences, body, soul, and spirit—a kind of trinity in unity. The text which is usually adduced in proof of this is the following passage of St. Paul:—

"And the God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit, soul, and body be preserved entire without blame unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. v. 23, 24.)

On the strength of this passage it has been affirmed that an inspired Apostle teaches that man consists of three distinct parts, viz. body, soul, and spirit, or at least that such is the composition of the regenerate man; and most important theories have been erected on this as a foundation.

The objection against the assumption that St. Paul intended in this passage to teach a psychology of man which should be philosophically accurate, is a very obvious one. The passage is a prayer for the complete sanctification of his

Thessalonian converts, and their preservation in holiness unto the coming of Jesus Christ. It is therefore incredible that in such a prayer he should have intended to elaborate a philosophical psychology of man. On similar grounds we might be equally justified in affirming that our Lord, in the following utterance, teaches that man consists of four principles, viz. heart, soul, mind, and strength ; for, on being questioned which commandment is the first of all, He answers—

“ The first is, Hear, O Israel ; The Lord our God, the Lord is one ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” (Mark xii. 29, 30.)

The fact is, that in both passages the thing dealt with is practical and not philosophical truth, and the words used are the words which were current among ordinary Greek-speaking people to denote various aspects of the entire man, without any regard to whether they did or did not constitute an accurate psychology. But as these terms are frequently used by the apostolic writers in connection with this subject, it will be necessary to give a careful consideration to the sense in which they use them.

First, *πνεύμα*, spirit.

The following are the meanings which this word bears in the New Testament :—

1. It is applied to God himself. “ God,” says our Lord, “ is a spirit.”

2. In the same passage in which it is thus used as descriptive of the Divine nature, it is also employed to describe those higher affections in man through the active exercise of which he can alone render an acceptable worship to God.

“ And they that worship him,” adds our Lord, “ must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

The point of contrast here intended to be brought out is

between such worship and the ritualism and localism of the worship rendered to God under the Jewish dispensation.

3. It is used as the designation of the Comforter, whom our Lord promised to send to his disciples after his removal from them. Thus our Lord designates him,—

“The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father.”  
(John xv. 26.)

4. It is used to denote that state of mind which is capable of appreciating the higher forms of Christian teaching, as contrasted with its elementary principles.

“I speak unto you,” says St. Paul, “not as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with meat, for ye were not yet able to bear it ; nay, not even now are ye able.” (1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.)

It will hardly be contended that the Apostle considered those whom he here designates as carnal to be devoid of what is called spirit, or of spiritual life ; yet such they must have been if the words are used with strict philosophical precision.

5. As a description of our Lord’s teaching, as contrasted with teaching which is mere legalism, literalism, and ritualism. Thus he says :—

“It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life.” (John vi. 63.)

6. As a condition of the human mind, in which its higher affections are in active exercise while its intellectual powers are in abeyance. Thus St. Paul writes :—

“Yea, if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth but my understanding (*νόος*) is unfruitful. I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15.)

It follows, therefore, that those who affirm from 1 Thess. v. 23, 24, that St. Paul teaches that man consists of three

separate entities, body, soul, and spirit, would be justified from these words in adding on a fourth, viz. understanding (*νόος*), for, taken literally, they affirm that spirit (*πνεῦμα*) and understanding (*νόος*), as they exist in man, are two principles distinct from each other. The truth is that the Apostle is alluding to that abnormal mental condition designated ecstasy, in which, while some of our mental faculties are apparently asleep, others are in active operation. Of this we who do not fall into the ecstatic state have some experience in dreams.

7. As an influence which is exerted on the mind. Thus the Apostle writes :—

“God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day.” (Rom. x. 18.)

So also he writes to the Corinthians :—

“I verily, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already, as though I were present, judged him that hath so wrought this thing.” (1 Cor. v. 3.)

8. In the following passage it stands for the whole of the mental powers, including the principle of animal life :—

“And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. But he, taking her by the hand, called, saying, Maiden, arise : and her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately, and he commanded that something should be given her to eat.” (Luke viii. 53—55.)

9. As that in man which survives the death of the body, *i.e.* our conscious personality. Thus St. Stephen prayed immediately before his death, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

10. The primary meaning of *πνεῦμα*, as given in Greek lexicons, is wind or breath ; its secondary ones are life, soul, spirit. In the following utterance of our Lord we have it used in its highest and lowest sense in the same sentence :—

“The wind [τὸ πνεῦμα] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος). (John iii. 8.)

Feeling the difficulty of assigning two different meanings to the same word in the same sentence, the Revisers have given as an alternative marginal rendering, “The Spirit breatheth.” Our Lord’s utterance will then run thus:—

“The Spirit breatheth where it listeth, and thou hearest his voice, but knowest not whence he cometh or whither he goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

The reader will, I think, be of opinion that this rendering deprives the comparison, “so is every one that is born of the Spirit,” of all meaning.

11. The word *πνεῦμα*, with the addition of the word “unclean,” though occasionally without it, is habitually used as descriptive of the nature of those beings whom the Gospels designate *δαιμόνια*, rendered in both versions “devils,” but correctly in the margin of the Revised Version, “demons;” as, for example, “unclean spirits, or the spirit of an unclean demon.” The word *πνεῦμα*, as thus applied, is devoid of every conception connected with holiness. Respecting the mode in which these demons exist the New Testament is silent; but it implies that they are disembodied spirits, and that there is a strong desire on their part to enter into men and animals, and to use their bodily and their nervous organisations for their own evil purposes. It is remarkable that the word *πνεῦμα*, spirit, is only once, and that in a passage of doubtful meaning, applied to an angel,\* the same writer carefully distinguishing between them and the spirits of just men made perfect.

Such are the various senses which the apostolic writers and

\* “Who maketh his angels (*πνεῦματα*) spirits,” or as in the Revised Version, “winds.” (Heb. i. 7.)

the Greek-speaking members of the different Churches attached to the word *πνεῦμα*. It is evident, therefore, that its meaning in any particular passage can only be determined from the context. It is, in fact, used in its popular meaning and not in an exclusive or scientific sense.

Next, the word *ψυχὴ*.

This word is generally rendered, both in the Authorised and the Revised Versions, "soul," and occasionally "life," though the word *ψυχικὸς*, which is directly derived from it and expresses its adjective meaning, is translated in both versions by the word "natural." The ambiguity of this last word may be judged from the fact that Webster's Dictionary assigns to it no less than fourteen meanings, none of which precisely correspond with that of the word *ψυχικὸς*. The fact is, that while the Greek of the New Testament has the words *ψυχικὸς*, and *πνευματικὸς* to express the adjective sense of *ψυχὴ* and *πνεῦμα* respectively, the English has only "spiritual" to express that of spirit, but no corresponding adjective to express that of soul. This is unfortunate, for from the word "natural," which is the translation of the word *ψυχικὸς* in both versions, many doctrinal inferences have been drawn which the word thus translated by no means justifies. The word *ψυχὴ*, soul, bears a very wide meaning in the New Testament; equally wide, therefore, must be that of its adjective, *ψυχικὸς*, to which the English has no corresponding word; and to express its meaning it would be necessary to invent such a word as "soulual," which would stand in the same relation to soul as the word spiritual does to spirit; whereas the translation of the word *ψυχικὸς* by "natural," leads the English reader to mistake the Apostle's meaning. I will now adduce examples of the various senses in which these words are used by the sacred writers.

In the Gospels the word *ψυχὴ* (soul) is used to denote, first, that in man which is capable of existing separate from

the body; secondly, the bodily life itself; thirdly, both the one and the other in the same sentence.

Of the first of these the following are examples:—

“Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ( $\psi\nu\chi\nu$ ); but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” (Matt. x. 28.)

In this passage the soul is not only contrasted with the bodily life, but is spoken of as something which is capable of existing separate from the body, and as containing the personality. Men can kill the one, but they cannot kill the other.

“My soul ( $\psi\nu\chi\nu$ ) doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit ( $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\nu$ ) hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” (Luke i. 46, 47.)

In this passage the words  $\psi\nu\chi\nu$ , soul, and  $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\nu$ , spirit, are evidently used as synonymous in meaning, each denoting the personality, including the reasoning powers and the higher affections of the mind.

“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls” ( $\psi\nu\chi\nu\hat{\alpha}\hat{\iota}\hat{\sigma}$ ). (Matt. xi. 28, 29.) Here, again, the word  $\psi\nu\chi\nu$ , soul, is used to denote the entire personality.

2. In the following passage it evidently denotes the bodily life only:—

“Be ye not anxious for your life ( $\psi\nu\chi\nu$ ), what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life ( $\psi\nu\chi\nu$ ) more than the food, and the body than the raiment?” (Matt. vi. 25.)

3. In the following utterances the word  $\psi\nu\chi\nu$  is used in a more popular sense to denote in one part of the same sentence the bodily life, and in another part of it the personality:—

“Whosoever would save his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\nu\nu$ ) shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\nu\nu$ ) for my sake shall

find it. For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ ), or what shall a man give in exchange for his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ )?" (Matt. xvi. 25, 26.)

In St. Luke's Gospel this utterance is reported thus:—

"For whosoever would save his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) for my sake the same shall save it. For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose or forfeit his own self?" (Luke ix. 24, 25.)

St. Luke's report of this utterance, therefore, renders it certain that the word  $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}$  is used in the first part of the utterance, as recorded by St. Matthew, to denote the bodily life, and in the second part the personality, "his own self" being used as the equivalent of the  $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}$  of St. Matthew, the one being that which man can destroy and the other that which he cannot.

"He that loveth his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) loses it, and he that hateth his life ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) in this world shall keep it ( $\alpha\dot{\iota}\tau\dot{\iota}\nu$ ) unto life ( $\zeta\omega\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) eternal." "Now is my soul ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." (John xii. 25, 27.)

In this utterance the word  $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}$ , in the two first places where it is used, unquestionably means the bodily life and nothing more; but in the third ( $\alpha\dot{\iota}\tau\dot{\iota}\nu$ ) it is used to denote something which does not perish at death, which will be preserved unto life eternal ( $\epsilon\iota\sigma\zeta\omega\dot{\eta}\nu\alpha\dot{\iota}\omega\nu\iota\omega$ ); and in the fourth it can mean nothing less than our Lord's entire humanity. Thus in the account of the agony in the garden we read—

"My soul ( $\psi\nu\chi\dot{\eta}\nu$ ) is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

What was thus sorrowful? Surely not our Lord's bodily life, but his human spirit; that soul of which he had before affirmed that those who were able to kill the body had no

more that they could do, for they were not able to kill the soul.

Similarly wide is its use in the other writings of the New Testament. Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles—

“And there were added unto them on that day three thousand souls” ( $\psi\nu\chi\alpha\iota$ ). (Acts ii. 41.)

“Now the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.” (Acts iv. 32.)

“Confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations, they must enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts xiv. 22.)

In each of these passages it is evidently used to denote the entire man, including the personality, and the higher affections; and the idea of the bodily life seems not to have entered into the writer's thoughts. But in the two following it denotes life in the popular sense of that word:—

“I perceive that this voyage will be attended with injury and much loss, not only to the lading of the ship, but also to our lives ( $\psi\nu\chi\hat{\omega}\nu$ ). (Acts xxvii. 10.)

“And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of life ( $\psi\nu\chi\hat{\eta}\varsigma$ ) among you, but only of the ship.” (Acts xxvii. 22.)

Yet in the same chapter the word is used to denote the entire man:—

“And there were in the ship two hundred three score and sixteen souls” ( $\psi\nu\chi\alpha\iota$ ). (Acts xxvii. 37.)

So also in the Epistles, St. James thus writes:—

“Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” ( $\psi\nu\chi\acute{a}\varsigma$ ). (James i. 21.)

Here it obviously means a man's self. But in the following passage it is used to denote life and life only:—

“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, for what is your life? ( $\psi\nu\chi\acute{\eta}$ ) for ye are as a vapour that

appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." (James iv. 14.)

St. Peter, on the other hand, uses it to denote that in man which survives the death of the body. Thus he writes:—

"On whom though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" ( $\psi\nu\chi\hat{\omega}\nu$ ). (1 Peter i. 8, 9.)

"Seeing ye have purified your souls ( $\psi\nu\chi\hat{a}s$ ) in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren." (1 Peter i. 22.)

"Beloved, I beseech you, as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" ( $\psi\nu\chi\hat{\eta}s$ ). (1 Peter ii. 11.)

In this last quotation, instead of including man's animal nature under the word  $\psi\nu\chi\hat{\eta}$ , he expressly excludes it, designating it by the term "fleshly lusts" which war against the soul.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is obviously used to denote man's personality without any reference to his animal nature. Thus the author writes:—

"But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition, but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul" ( $\psi\nu\chi\hat{\eta}s$ ) (Heb. x. 39), the word soul in the previous verse having been used in reference to God Himself. "But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrink back, my soul ( $\psi\nu\chi\hat{\eta}$ ) hath no pleasure in him." (Heb. x. 38.) Here God himself is represented as the speaker.

The use of this word in St. Paul's Epistles is extremely rare, occurring in five or six passages only. In each of these it is used to denote the entire living man. When, however, the Apostle wishes to express the spiritual or higher nature of man, in contrast to his animal or lower nature, he for the most part makes use of the words  $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha$ , spirit, and

*σάρξ*, flesh, occasionally varying the former by the words *ζωή*, life, *καρδία*, heart, and *σπλάγχνα*, which, as employed by him, has much the same signification. But the sense which he has attached to the word *ψυχικός*, which expresses the adjective meaning of *ψυχή*, requires a brief consideration. Thus he writes in the following passages:—

“Now the natural (*ψυχικός*) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged.”  
(1 Cor. ii. 14.)

“It is sown a natural (*ψυχικόν*) body; it is raised a spiritual (*πνευματικὸν*) body. If there is a natural (*ψυχικόν*) body, there is also a spiritual (*πνευματικὸν*) body. So also it is written, the first man Adam became a living soul (*εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν*); the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (*εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν*). Howbeit that is not first that is spiritual (*τὸ πνευματικόν*) but that which is natural (*ψυχικόν*), then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man is from heaven. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Cor. xv. 44—53.)

It is important that the reader should observe that the word here given, “natural,” in both versions by no means represents the meaning of the Greek *ψυχικός*, of which it professes to be a translation. The words *φύσις* and *φυσικός* are the Greek representatives of the English words “nature” and “natural;” and with their use the writers of the New Testament were familiar, as is proved by the following examples:—

“We, that are Jews by nature (*φύσει*) and not sinners of the Gentiles.” (Gal. ii. 15.)

“Does not nature (*φύσις*) itself teach.” (1 Cor. xi. 14.)  
 “Do by nature (*φύσει*) the things of the law.” (Rom. ii. 14.)

“The natural (*φυσικὴ*) use into that which is against nature” (*φύσιν*). (Rom. i. 26.)

The above quotations prove that the words *ψυχὴ* and *ψυχικὸς* are used in the New Testament in a wide, popular, and somewhat indefinite signification, at one time denoting that in man which is distinct from his bodily organism, including his personality and his higher faculties; at another, his nature as an animal. It is in this last sense in which it is used in the following passage:—

“The natural” (*ψυχικὸς*, that is the “soulual” or animal) “man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,” and this is equivalent in meaning to the words carnal or fleshly, which the Apostle uses in numerous places of his writings to convey the same idea. The carnal or animal man (*ψυχικὸς*) is one in whom the animal propensities dominate; the spiritual man is one in whom the will and the higher affections have attained the victory over man’s animal nature, its propensities and passions, and hold them in subjection.

It is evident therefore that the English word “natural,” which is given in both versions as the translation of the Greek *ψυχικὸς*, is a very inadequate representation of the Apostle’s meaning in the above passages.

What then does he mean when he speaks of our present body as a *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, and our resurrection body as a *σῶμα πνευματικόν*? A *ψυχικὸν σῶμα* must be a body so organised as to be a suitable instrument through which the principle designated (*ψυχὴ*) can manifest itself in action. To get a clear idea of his meaning it will be necessary to refer to his views respecting the condition in which the first man was created. Quoting Genesis ii. he says:—

“The first man, Adam, became a living soul.”

The passage in Genesis is as follows :—

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed.” (Gen. ii. 7, 8.)

The obvious meaning of these words is that Adam's body was formed as a mere organism out of the dust of the ground, and that by a special act of the Creator, “a living soul” (*ζωσα ψυχη*) was breathed into it ; and that the man thus created was placed in the garden. What portion of man's higher faculties were intended to be included under the expression “a living soul” we are not informed ; but the contrast which the Apostle draws between the *ψυχικὸν* (rendered natural) and the *πνευματικὸν* (spiritual), in the following words, “Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural” (*ψυχικὸν*), “then that which is spiritual,” throws some light on the sense in which he used them, viz. that the one denoted man united to an animal nature, in whom the spiritual element was comparatively latent; and the other denoted man, in whom the animal nature had passed away, and the spiritual element reigned supreme.

My conclusion from the review of the above passages is, that the words *πνεῦμα*, spirit, and *ψυχὴ*, soul, are frequently used interchangeably to denote one and the same thing, viz. everything in man which distinguishes him from a mere animal. In one respect, however, *πνεῦμα* has a wider signification than *ψυχὴ*, being frequently applied to God, whereas *ψυχὴ* is only once so used ; *πνεῦμα* is also used as the designation of evil spirits, which *ψυχὴ* never is. In another respect *ψυχὴ* has a wider signification than *πνεῦμα*, being on several occasions used to denote man's present bodily life, which *πνεῦμα* never is. It is somewhat remarkable that the

English word "soul" bears a similarly wide signification in popular language, as, for instance, when we speak of a ship going to the bottom and every soul on board perishing. So St. Paul, addressing the sailors, says, "I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of life ( $\psi\nu\chi\eta\varsigma$ ) among you, but only of the ship." It is also worthy of remark that our Lord is never once represented in the Gospels as applying the word  $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha$  to man, but only  $\psi\nu\chi\eta\varsigma$ . He once applies  $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha$  to Himself when on the cross he uttered the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" but what He there speaks of as His  $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha$ , according to St. John, a day or two before, he designated His  $\psi\nu\chi\eta\varsigma$ . "Now is my soul ( $\psi\nu\chi\eta\varsigma$ ) troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save ME from this hour." It is impossible therefore to base any theory respecting the psychology of man on the use of these words in the New Testament.

### $\Sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$ (body).

This word in its primary signification denotes our mere bodily framework. It is also frequently used to include that principle of animal life which, when united with it, distinguishes it from dead matter, and occasionally in a wider sense, to include the entire man. Of this last usage the following are examples:—

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies ( $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ ) a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. xii. 1.)

"Know ye not that your body ( $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ ) is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

But in the following passages it is used to denote man's animal, in contrast to his higher, nature:—

"But I buffet my body ( $\sigma\acute{\omega}\mu\alpha$ ) and bring it into subjec-

tion, lest by any means after I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected." (1 Cor. ix. 27.)

"And if Christ be in you the body (*σῶμα*) is dead" (not that he meant devoid of life), "because of sin, but the spirit (*πνεῦμα*) is life, because of righteousness." (Rom. viii. 10.)

But when he wishes to express the same idea he generally uses the word flesh (*σάρξ*). Thus he writes:—

"For I know that in me, *i.e.* in my flesh (*σαρκὶ*), dwelleth no good thing." (Rom. vii. 18.)

In fact, as has been already observed, throughout this chapter he speaks of his animal and spiritual nature as though they constituted in him a kind of double personality, between which was waged an incessant struggle for the superiority. Thus he writes in continuation of the above passage:—

"For to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would, I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then the law, that to me who would do good, evil is present. But I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind" (*νοῦς*)—surely *νοῦς* must be here intended to include not only intellect but conscience also—"and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So, then, I myself with the mind (*νοῦς*) serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. vii. 18—25.)

My general conclusion, therefore, is that it is impossible from the use of these terms in the New Testament to propound a theory of the psychology of man. None of them, as the above citations prove, are used with strict scientific precision, or as denoting separate entities which conjointly

compose the man, but in the wide and indefinite sense which they bear in ordinary Greek. Its affirmations assure us of two things, and of two things only :—

First, that holy men will certainly enjoy a happy conscious existence after death.

Secondly, that at some period of the future they will be united to a material organism, called by St. Paul a spiritual body, which will be an instrument adapted for the exercise of man's highest intellectual powers and the most exalted affections of his spiritual and moral nature.

## II.—The words *aiών* (æon), *aiώνιος*, *κόσμος* (cosmos), &c.

These words are in very frequent use in the New Testament in connection with the subject we are considering. In the Authorised Version the translation of the two first is not unfrequently misleading ; and it is to be regretted that even the Revisers, while they have corrected some of the inaccurate renderings of the Authorised Version, have allowed themselves to use English words which imperfectly represent the meaning of the Greek ; and this occasionally in direct violation of their own rule to translate the same Greek word by the same English one, unless the sense of the passage renders it necessary to do otherwise ; for example, in the case of  $\psi\nu\chi\eta$ , as we have seen above. Of this fault their rendering of *aiών* and *κόσμος*, in the parable of the tares, by the same English word is a striking example, leading to an absolute misrepresentation of the sense.

The word *aiών* means an age—*i.e.* a limited period of time of indeterminate length, it may be long or it may be short, from which it passes off to denote a dispensation—and *aiώνιος* is an adjective which stands in the same relation to it as *πνευματικός* does to *πνεῦμα*, and *ψυχικός* to *ψυχή*. It is never used to denote the world in which we live, though it has been not unfrequently rendered by the word “world”

even by the Revisers, who, when they have so done, have put the word "age," its true meaning, into the margin as an alternative rendering. The sacred writers, be it observed, were in the habit of dividing the past and the future into a number of ages or dispensations, one of which was—

The Jewish age, or dispensation.

Another—

The Christian age, or the present kingdom of God in its incipient and progressive state, under which we are now living.

Another—

That same kingdom when it shall have realised the purposes of its institution ;

And a fourth—

When the Son shall have resigned this kingdom to God, even the Father.

It is also even used to denote a short period of time, as when the Apostle writes, "Who hath delivered us from the present evil age," *i.e.* from the moral and spiritual corruption of the times during which he was then living.

But the words in question are not confined to these definite meanings ; they are frequently used indefinitely. Thus we read of "the ages ;" and when the sacred writers wish to speak of periods of very prolonged duration they use the words "the ages of the ages" (*oî aîwves tâv aîwvov*), words which are rendered in both versions "for ever and ever," but in the Revised Version usually with the caution in the margin that their strict translation is, "to the ages of ages." Towards the end of the Apostolic age and in the times which followed it the word *aîwv* (æon) had passed off in the hands of a set of philosophic dreamers to denote not periods of time but a set of beings, who were supposed to be emanations from the primal Deity, who occupied an intermediate place between Him and the universe of matter, in which they placed the

origin of evil. These æons constituted a very numerous family, of whom the Demiurge, the Creator of this present world, and who was the most remote from the primal Deity, was one, and the Christ another, who united Himself to the human Jesus at the time of His baptism, and very ungenerously deserted Him at the time of His crucifixion. But of these airy speculations the New Testament contains no trace.

The word *aiών* in the singular, its plural, *aiώνες*, and even the far stronger term, *ἐις τοὺς αἰώνας τῶν αἰώνων*, “to the ages of the ages,” are never the precise equivalent of duration without limits. Our conception of that which we designate eternity is a negative one, and denotes duration devoid of all limitations, or one which has never had a beginning and which will never have an end; whereas, the fundamental conception of the Greek *aiών*, “age,” involves the idea of limitation, and its indefinite multiplication, “ages of ages,” like our English expression “millions of millions,” really denotes only a finite quantity; for, however extended such periods may be, a time must come when they will have an end. Yet when this period, however inconceivably vast, has reached its termination, we shall be no nearer the end of that which we designate eternity than when these ages of ages first began. Putting the matter briefly, it is simply impossible that the same word can denote duration which is limited and duration which is limitless.

Practical as was the purpose of the Apostolic writers, it may be a question whether our modern philosophic conception of eternity ever entered into their minds. With them the great *aiών* was *the age to come*, or *the Messianic age*. This formed the perspective of their thoughts respecting duration, and beyond its horizon they scarcely ever travelled. The terms, “the age,” “the ages,” and “the ages of ages,” fully satisfied all their requirements, the two last being used by them to denote limited periods of time

indefinitely long. When they wish to express an idea precisely corresponding to that which we understand by our word immortality, they use such words as *Αθανάσια*, deathlessness, *Αφθάρσια*, incorruptibility, with their corresponding adjectives, and such words as, by the aid of negative particles, affirm that the original finite conception is destitute of limitations.

Further, let it be observed that whatever meanings the sacred writers attached to the word *αιών*, &c., the word *αιώνιος* conveys their adjective sense. In English, however, we have no corresponding adjective to the word age. In the absence of one, we have adopted the Latin word "eternal," which not only fails to convey to the English reader the idea of limitation expressed by the word age, or dispensation, but has passed off into a technical sense denoting duration without limits, and as such is hardly distinguishable from the word everlasting. Its English equivalent would be "age-long."

The word which the writers of the New Testament use to denote the world in which we live is *κόσμος*, never *αιών*, but in an overwhelming majority of instances they use the word *κόσμος* in a moral sense, and for the most part in an evil one. This is the all but universal usage in the Gospel and in the First Epistle of St. John; and generally throughout the New Testament the word in this its moral sense is set forth as the great opposing principle to the kingdom of God, or is used to denote the moral corruption of the state of society as it then existed, and of that of all subsequent times as far as they resemble it. *Aiών* also not unfrequently bears a similar meaning, but generally with the addition of the word *πονηρός*, "evil." Thus St. Paul writes, "That he might deliver us from the present evil age," which word in both versions is translated "world," though in the Revised Version "age" is inserted in the margin.

It is obvious that the Apostle meant by "the present evil

age," a period of very limited duration, and that those whom he was addressing would so understand it, for both he and they were expecting the speedy manifestation of a better one. It is evident, therefore, from this use of the word *aiών*, and from others that we shall presently notice, that it is used to denote an indefinite but a limited period of time, whereas the conception of endlessness, or duration without limits, being incapable of being realised in any positive form of thought, can only be approximately expressed by the use of negatives. This being so, it is impossible that the word *aiών*, when standing by itself, can denote duration without limits, or be the equivalent of what is popularly understood by the English word eternal or everlasting.

The translating *aiών* by the word "world" is very misleading to the English reader. By it he is led to believe, when he meets with such expressions as "the end of the world," that the event referred to is the destruction of the planet, whereas, what they usually mean is, the termination of the age or dispensation. Of the confusion of thought thus occasioned a remarkable example occurs in the parable of the tares, as has been above observed, where the words *κόσμος* and *aiών* are translated by the same word, "world," though they are carefully distinguished from one another by the Divine speaker. "The field," says He, "is the world" (*ὁ κόσμος*); the harvest is the end, not of the world, but "the consummation of the age" (*συντέλεια τοῦ αἰώνος*). Mis-translations of this kind have led to endless misconceptions respecting what the writers of the New Testament mean when they speak of the end of all things as at hand, the end of the world, and, by consequence, the coming of Christ. It is unquestionable that in not a few passages these and similar expressions refer not to what we designate "the end of the world," but the final winding up of the Jewish dispensation and the awful events with which it was attended, and

the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ or the kingdom of God as a visible community on earth.

As the words *aiών*, and *aiώνιος* occupy an important place in the controversy as to what is the teaching of the New Testament respecting the future destiny of man, it will be desirable to give a few examples of the sense which they bear in the sacred writings.

The following passage stands thus in the Authorised Version :—

“ For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world (*κόσμος*) ; but now once in the end of the world (*συντελείω τῶν αἰώνων*) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. ix. 26).

So erroneous is this translation, that the Revisers have substituted for “the end of the world,” “the end of the ages,” and have not even placed the word “world” in the margin as an alternative rendering. Nothing, therefore, can be more certain than that the sacred writer here means by “the end of the ages” not what is commonly understood by “the end of the world,” but the termination of the Jewish dispensation. This is evident, for it was then, and then only, that Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Also his use of the plural, “ages,” shows that he must have been of opinion that there were other dispensations prior to the Jewish. This passage, therefore, clearly proves that many expressions in the New Testament which are commonly supposed to refer to the consummation of all things, refer not to that event, but to the consummation of the Jewish dispensation ; and that the Parousia, or as it is translated, “coming,” of Christ (Parousia really means presence), often refers not to His personal coming, but to a manifestation of His presence in providence for the purpose of bringing that dispensation to a close.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read in both versions :—

"Through whom also he made the worlds," the word "ages" being inserted in the margin of the Revised Version as an alternative rendering. In St. John's Gospel the creation of the world, *i.e.* of the *κόσμος*, is ascribed to Jesus Christ; so also in the Pauline epistles, but the sacred writer only affirms in this passage that through Him God constituted the ages, or dispensations. The idea of "*the worlds*" was unknown to the Hebrew and to ancient writers generally, the ancients knowing nothing of the sun, moon, and stars, as worlds. When the former wished to express the sum total of creation, they designated it "*the heavens and the earth*." Thus the Apostle writes—

"For in him were all things created in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible, and things invisible." (Col. i. 16).

The following are examples of the meaning of the word *aiών* when used to express duration:—

"Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever." (Phil. iv. 20.)

The Apostle did not write "for ever and ever," but, as the margin of the Revised Version has it, "unto the ages of ages." So in the Revelation the sacred writer, speaking of the devil, the beast, and the false prophet, is represented as saying—

"They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Here again the margin gives us as an alternative rendering "unto the ages of ages," which beyond all question is the correct one.

So again, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (*eis τοὺς αἰώνας*, *i.e.* "to the ages"); "and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke i. 32, 33.)

Strong, however, as this language is, it does not denote our

metaphysical idea of duration without limits ; for respecting the Messianic kingdom, St. Paul makes the following affirmations :—

“Then cometh the end, when he (i.e. Christ) shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when he shall have abolished all rule, and all authority, and power ; for he must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet. . . . And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected unto him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Cor. xv. 24—28.)

Here we have the positive affirmation of St. Paul, that however prolonged may be the existence of the Messianic kingdom throughout the æons to come, a time is coming in the future when the Christ will resign that kingdom to the Father, and the Son himself will be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all. This, however, will not take place until He has abolished all rule, authority, and power, and put all His enemies under His feet.

“Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.” (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

Of the destruction of the planet our Lord says nothing. Here, again, the margin of the Revised Version gives us the correct meaning :—

“Lo, I am with you alway, even to the consummation of the age,” i.e. of the Messianic age.

Again : “As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” (Luke i. 70.) So in Acts iii. 21 : “Whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.”

The Greek of the words here translated “which have been since the world began,” is in the one case  $\tauῶν ἀπ' αἰώνος προφῆτῶν$ , and in the other,  $ἀπ' αἰώνος$ . Neither says

anything about the beginning or ending of the world in which we live. Nor can the expression, *ἀπ' αἰώνος*, possibly mean from eternity, because prophets have not existed from eternity, but only within historical times. St. Paul, when he wishes to express the idea conveyed by the versions writes, *πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου*, *i.e.* "before the foundation of the world." (Eph. i. 4.)

So again the Apostle writes:—

"Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come." (Eph. i. 21.)

Here again the Revisers have given the exact meaning in the margin: "Not only in this age but also in that which is to come;" the words, "this age," being used to denote the age or dispensation under which the Apostle was living, and "the age to come" the kingdom of the Messiah in its future glorious manifestation.

A few verses further on he thus writes:—

"Wherein aforetime ye walked, according to *the course* of this world (*κατὰ τὸν αἰώνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*)," or, as correctly rendered in the margin, "according to the age of this world," the word *αἰώνα* being here used to denote the existing state of things as they came under the Apostle's observation, and bearing only a very indefinite reference either to the past or to the future.

In the next chapter we have the singular translation—

"To make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages (*ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων*) hath been hid in God, who created all things . . . . according to the eternal purpose (*κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων*) which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. iii. 9—11.)

Here the same Greek words are rendered in one verse "from the ages," and in the next but one by the word "eternal." But while this is the rendering in the text, the Revisers have

thought it necessary to inform us in the margin that the accurate translation of the Greek words is, not "the eternal purpose," but "the purpose from the ages."

So again in the Epistle to the Romans :—

"According to the revelation of the mystery, which hath been kept in silence through times eternal (*χρόνοις αἰώνιοις*), but now is manifested according to the commandment of the eternal (*αἰώνιον*) God." (Rom. xvi. 25, 26.)

So also in the Epistle to Titus :—

"In hope of eternal (*αἰώνιον*) life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before times eternal (*πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνιων*)."  
(Titus i. 2.)

In the second of these passages the Apostle affirms that God promised "eternal life" before "times eternal." Here the words "times eternal" are evidently used to denote, not what we mean by eternity, but finite periods of time; because the Apostle affirms that God made the promise before these "eternal times" (*χρόνων αἰώνιων*) began. It is impossible, therefore, that he could have intended to express by these words what we understand by the expression, "the eternity of the past," because he expressly affirms that these "eternal times" had a beginning, when he says that the promise was made before them. Similar also must be the meaning of these words in the passage quoted from the Epistle to the Romans. In each case the Apostle's meaning would be better expressed by translating *αἰώνιων χρόνων*, the age-long times, for according to the commonly accepted meaning of the word "eternal," to speak of anything as existing prior to eternity is a contradiction in terms.

But in the same passage the Apostle uses the word *αἰώνιος* as an epithet of God. It may therefore be argued that it must mean "eternal," in the sense of without beginning and without end. But, inasmuch as the word *αἰώνιος* can only convey the adjective meaning of the word *αἰών*, and the

words *aiών* and *aiώνες*, when used to express duration, can only express limited spaces of time, such as ages or dispensations, and their multiple, *aiώνες τὰν aiώνων*, ages of ages, *i.e.* limited spaces of time however long—for it is impossible, by any process of multiplication, to make the same word express the idea of limitation and the absence of it—there is every reason for translating *aiώνιος Θεός*, “the God who exists throughout the ages,” or, “the age-long God.” When the writers of the New Testament ascribe to God existence without beginning, or existence without end, they use the words *aiδιος*, everlasting; *ἀφθαρτός*, incorruptible, *ὁ μόνος ἔχων ἀθανάσιαν*, who only hath immortality; and the still more definite expression used by the author of the Apocalypse, *τὸ ἀ, καὶ τὸ ὁ ὁ ἀν, καὶ ὁ ἵν, καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ὁ παντοκράτωρ*, the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. The language of the Old Testament, however, is far richer than that of the New in its means of expressing the self-existence of the Divine being. This idea is conveyed whenever the sacred name Jehovah occurs; but it is completely lost sight of in the word *Kύριος* (which simply means Lord), which the Septuagint translators, owing to their dread of uttering the sacred name, chose to substitute for it, from whom the writers of the New Testament, who for the most part used this version, have borrowed it. The ungrammatical Greek of the Apocalypse above quoted, with its English translation, is the only expression in the New Testament which adequately expresses the meaning of the Divine name as it was revealed to Moses and used by the other writers of the Old Testament Scriptures, bringing prominently forward, as it did at every recurrence of it, the idea of the self-existence of God.

This application of the word *aiώνιος* to God, compared with its usage by St. Jude, brings before us the extreme limits within which the writers of the New Testament have

used it as an expression to denote duration. St. Jude writes as follows :—

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over unto fornication, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal (*aiώνιος*) fire ;” or, as in the margin, “as an example of eternal fire, suffering punishment” (Jude, verse 7).

Here the word *aiώνιος* (rendered in both versions “eternal”) is evidently applied to the fire from heaven by which the Book of Genesis tells us that these cities were destroyed, and to the effects produced by it. It is impossible that the passage can have been intended to be descriptive of the punishment inflicted on the inhabitants of these cities in the unseen world, because the writer refers to it *as a visible and palpable warning to sinners*, whereas the punishments which they will undergo beyond the grave are not visible and palpable warnings, but matters of faith only. The writer of the Epistle, therefore, when he applied the word *aiώνιος* to the fire by which these cities were consumed, must have intended to affirm that the utter destruction of these cities by fire from heaven had made them a permanent and enduring monument of God’s wrath against sin, and, as such, a solemn warning to sinners in every age.

The following passage in St. Mark’s Gospel shows the importance in translating the words *aiών* and *aiώνιος*, of assigning to them a meaning strictly in conformity with that which they bear in the original. Peter had just put the question what they, *i.e.* the Apostles, should gain by having forsaken all and having followed Christ. Our Lord, having promised them certain things which they would gain in this life, adds, according to both versions :—

“And in the world to come”—the Revised Version has placed “age” in the margin—“eternal life.”

The Greek of this is, *ἐν τῷ αἰώνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ ζωὴν αἰώνιον*. Here, within three words of one another, the word *αἰών* is translated *world* and *age*, and its derivative *αἰώνιον*, *eternal*. Surely the following translation is the exact representation of the Greek: “In the age to come, age-long life.” This would have rendered it clear to the English reader that the word, here translated “eternal,” cannot have suggested to the speaker of Greek the idea of duration without limits. If, however, notwithstanding St. Paul’s assertion to the contrary, it is urged that the “age to come,” *i.e.* the kingdom of the Messiah, will be one of unlimited duration, and consequently that the word *αἰών*, without the addition of some negative particle can denote duration without limits, then the words *οἱ αἰώνες*, the ages, and *οἱ αἰώνες τῷ αἰώνιον*, “the ages of ages,” become meaningless.

So much for the positive meaning of the word *αἰών*. But when it is united with a term denoting negation, it is then capable of expressing the idea of duration without limits. Of this it will be sufficient to cite the following as examples:—

“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall never thirst.”  
Οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰώνα. (John iv. 14.)

“If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”  
Θένατον οὐ μὴ θεωρήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰώνα. (John viii. 51.)

“Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.”  
Οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰώνα. (John xi. 26.)

“Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Οὐ μὴ νίψῃς εἰς τὸν αἰώνα. (John xiii. 8.)

The union of the idea of negation with the word *αἰών* exerts precisely the same influence on its meaning as a similar union does with English words which in themselves convey the idea of limitation. Thus number becomes numberless; end, endless; finite, infinite; bound, boundless; and many others which it will be unnecessary to enumerate—the particle of negation negativing the idea of limitation which is involved

in the finite term. The sense which the word *aiώνιος*, when used in conjunction with the word *ζωή* (life), bears in the writings of St. John we will consider in a subsequent chapter.

The above passages prove that when the writers of the New Testament employ the words *aiών* and *aiώνιος* to denote duration, they use them with great indefiniteness of meaning, ranging from the remote period of the future, when the Son shall deliver up the Messianic kingdom to the Father, to a temporal judgment which is permanent in its effects, and periods intermediate between them. Thus *aiών* is used to denote the comparatively short period of the Jewish dispensation, and what St. Paul designates "this present evil age." This indefiniteness of meaning would be better conveyed to the English reader by introducing into the translation as an alternative rendering the words age, or age-long, instead of world, eternal, and everlasting. When, therefore, the English reader meets in either version with such expressions as everlasting, eternal, world, end of the world, world without end, age, ages, the ages of ages, for ever and ever, the end of the age, the consummation of the ages, &c., he should always remember that these terms are all translations of the Greek words *aiών* and *aiώνιος*, except where the word world is a translation of the Greek *κόσμος* or *οἰκουμένη γῆ*, and that the word *κόσμος* (world) is used in a great majority of instances to denote not the material but the moral world, and that when it is thus used it is nearly synonymous with *aiών πονηρός*, this evil age, and is almost universally used in a bad sense.

The opening address of the Epistle to the Galatians is a striking example of the strange freedom with which both versions have translated the word *aiών*, even when it is used within four consecutive lines. Thus both concur in translating ἐκ τῶν ἐνεστῶτος *aiώνος πονηροῦ*, "from the pre-

sent evil world," and two lines further on, *eis τὸν αἰώνα τῷν αἰώνων*, "for ever and ever." In the first instance, however, the Revisers inform their readers in the margin that the true meaning of the words is "the present evil age," and not "the present evil world;" and in the second, that the words *eis τὸν αἰώνα τῷν αἰώνων* mean neither for ever and ever, nor world without end, but, to the ages of ages; for *αἰών*, being a positive term, can only denote in the singular a period of limited but indefinite duration; and in the plural, periods of vast, indeterminate, yet limited duration. Further, the fact that the Gnostic sects designated those beings whom they conceived of as intermediate between the *Infinite God* and the *finite world* by the term *αἰώνες*, æons, proves that the word *αἰών* contained within itself the idea of limitation as an essential portion of the conception involved in it, for the last thing which they intended to ascribe to their imaginary *αἰώνες* was absolute or unlimited existence either *ex parte ante* or *ex parte post*.

### III.—Ζωή (Life), and Θάνατος (Death).

The words *ζωή* and *θάνατος* bear the same wide meaning in the Greek of the New Testament as the words life and death bear in popular English, that of the one being the direct negative of the other. What life is in itself we know not; and this being so, we are equally ignorant of what constitutes death. Both are used as designations of certain well-known phenomena. As, however, the terms "life" and "death" occupy an important place in this controversy, it will be necessary to offer a few observations on the various senses in which they are used by the sacred writers. Let us begin with death.

The primary meaning of this word is the cessation of the phenomena of life, whether it be that of a vegetable, an animal, or a man. From this, its primary meaning, it has

passed into a number of secondary or metaphorical ones. So also has life. Here, however, we have only to consider what these words mean when applied to man.

To those who hold that man consists of nothing but the particles of matter which compose his body, death means the extinction of his personal conscious being. But inasmuch as all mankind, with the exception of a small number of philosophical materialists, and it may be with the exception of a few tribes who are sunk into a condition of the lowest barbarism, are firmly persuaded that there is something in man which is separate and distinct from his bodily organism, these, when they use the word death, do not attach to it the idea of the annihilation of the personality, because they believe that it is capable of being separated from the body, and at death that it passes into the underworld, where it continues to exist, it may be, in a state of great weakness, yet still that it continues to exist there as a conscious personality. The word death, therefore, as used in its popularly accepted meaning, does not involve the idea of the destruction of the man; and as the Greek words in the New Testament are used not in a special technical sense, but in their ordinary accepted meaning, it does not denote this, unless there is something in the context which renders it necessary that this meaning should be assigned to it. Still less can it denote continued existence in never-ending misery.

Considerable importance has been attached in this controversy to the meaning intended to be conveyed by the threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," which was denounced against Adam as the penalty of violating the command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as though it determined the sense in which the word death is used in Scripture when it is threatened as the penalty of sin, or as defining the nature of the spiritual condition in which mankind are born. As I

have considered the nature and meaning of this threatening in a previous chapter, I need not repeat it here.

The word death, like all other general terms, has passed by analogy to denote ideas to which in its primary signification it is not strictly applicable. In such cases its meaning is more or less wide and incapable of strict definition. Thus, when we say that a man is become dead to a sense of right and wrong, we do not mean by it that his moral nature has ceased to exist, but that certain of its perceptions have become weak or powerless. So likewise when we speak of those affections which make up what we designate his spiritual nature, such as love, benevolence, self-sacrifice, reverence, and a vast number of others, and say of certain classes of men that they are spiritually dead, we do not mean that their affections have become so utterly extinct that not even the rudiments of them remain, but that they are sunk into such a state of weakness that the appetites which are their opposites, and the animal passions, so greatly preponderate as to hold their action in abeyance. In a similar manner we speak of a man born blind as dead to a sense of colour, and of one born deaf as dead to a sense of sound ; but all that we mean by these and similar expressions is that he has no idea of the meaning of the one or the other, owing to some imperfection in his organs of sensation, and not that those mental powers by which colours and sounds are perceived are extinct in him, nor even that he would be incapable of perceiving them if the physical obstructions were removed. Thus in ordinary language we apply the word "death" by analogy to a great variety of subjects without intending to affirm, or even to imply, that that which we speak of as dead has actually perished. To take an extreme case, we speak in popular language of a limb as dead, yet we do not mean to affirm that it has perished even as a limb, but only that the circulation of the blood is carried on in it very imperfectly, or is temporarily

suspended. Equally wide is the use of the word death in the New Testament when it is applied to the moral or spiritual condition of man, and its precise meaning can only be determined by a careful consideration of the context. Of this width of meaning we have a remarkable example in St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy: "But she," says he, "who giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." Of such a woman the context makes it plain that the Apostle did not mean to affirm that she was become actually dead to all moral and spiritual good, but only that her moral and spiritual life was far too much dominated over by her appetites and passions.

The seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a remarkable example of the wide sense in which the words "life" and "death" are used by the Apostolic writers. It demands therefore our careful consideration.

"Are ye ignorant," says St. Paul, "how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman that hath an husband is bound by the law to the husband, while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So, then, if while the husband liveth she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if the husband die, she is freed from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man." (Rom. vii. 1—3.)

Here the words "life" and "death," when applied to the husband, are obviously used in their primary signification to denote physical life and physical death respectively, but in the very next sentence the Apostle proceeds to use the word death in a sense highly metaphorical.

"Wherefore," says he, "ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye should be joined to another, even to him that was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the

flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. vii. 4—6.)

I need hardly remark, that in this passage the words "dead" and "death" are used in three, if not in four, different senses. What, then, does the Apostle mean when he says, "Ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye should be joined to another," &c. &c.? Obviously, that the work of Christ, having rendered the entire system of legalism nugatory, the Christian is as completely freed from all obligation to observe it as the wife is freed from the marriage bond by the husband's death; and that having become convinced of the powerlessness of legalism and its sanctions, as a motive to holiness, he should take refuge in those new moral and spiritual forces which are brought to bear on man by the Gospel, which the Apostle fully describes in the eighth chapter of this Epistle. He then adds, "But when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." What does he mean by this assertion? I answer, that the appetites and passions of man's animal nature being thus roused into activity, and no power being furnished by legalism of sufficient strength to overcome their violence, gain so complete a dominion over the entire man that they overbear his higher affections and almost extinguish them. I say "almost," because the existence of the struggle proves that they were not extinguished altogether. "But now," adds the Apostle, "we are discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held." What is the death here spoken of? Clearly, the discovery of the spiritual and moral powerlessness of legalism as a motive to holiness, the ceasing to

trust in it, and the determination to have done with it for evermore.

Two verses further on we read :—

“ But sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting ; for apart from the law sin is dead. For I was alive apart from the law once : but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. . . . For sin, finding occasion by the commandment, beguiled me, and by it slew me.” (Rom. vii. 8—11.)

The Apostle is here alluding to the fact, that a commandment forbidding the gratification of a powerful appetite often excites in those who are animated by no higher motive than legalism can furnish, an increased desire to gratify it.

In speaking of sin “ finding occasion,” “ working in him all manner of coveting,” “ deceiving him,” and “ slaying him,” the word “ sin ” is evidently a personification of man’s evil appetites and passions. What, then, does he mean when he says, that apart from the law sin is dead ? Not that these passions were non-existent in him, but that they were comparatively quiescent until they were stirred into activity by the commandment forbidding their gratification. He then adds, “ I was alive apart from the law once.” Surely, by the words “ I was alive,” he did not mean to affirm that as a legalist he was then a holy man, or what has been called “ spiritually alive ; ” and that a full appreciation of the commandment caused him to sink into a condition of spiritual death ; but that, prior to his attaining to a full sense of the wide-reaching character of the demands of the law, he thought that he was a holy man, or that he was in a fair way of becoming one. When, however, “ the commandment came,” *i.e.* when he had learned to appreciate the full extent of its demands, “ sin came to life again,” or, in other words, his sense of sin burst forth into fresh activity, and “ he died,” *i.e.* his hopes and expectations, derived from his original

legal standpoint, perished. So varied are the senses in which the words sin, death, life, and their equivalents are used in this single chapter.

The Apostle then proceeds with the description of his spiritual struggles.

“ So the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. Did then that which is good become death to me ? God forbid ; but sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death in me, through that which is good, that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful.” (Rom. vii. 12, 13.)

Here, again, the word “ death ” is used in a double sense, viz. first, as denoting the increased activity of his evil passions, and, secondly, the destruction of his hopes of attaining to holiness. So, also, the word “ sin ” is used in a twofold sense, denoting in the first place the effects produced by the activity of the evil appetites and passions, and, in the second, the sense of the evil of their activity. In conformity with these views, in the remainder of the chapter the Apostle speaks of himself as possessing a kind of double personality, one of which was constantly struggling against the other ; the one being a personification of those appetites and passions which were constantly instigating him to sin, the other being his conscience and his moral and spiritual affections, which led him to delight in the law of God after the inward man. Still he found it a matter of practical experience, that as long as he had nothing to fall back upon but the principles of legalism, his higher nature was uniformly overborne by his lower, *i.e.* by the overwhelming force of his appetites and passions ; and in view of this he exclaims, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” but he immediately adds, “ I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord ; ” and in the following chapter he proceeds to explain the nature and the mode of this deliverance.

The popularly accepted doctrines respecting Regeneration and Conversion have exerted no little influence in leading the ordinary reader to attach a kind of technical sense to the terms "life" and "death," as they are used in portions of the New Testament. These lay down that unless a man has passed through certain experiences, which are denoted by these terms, whatever may be his moral goodness he is yet spiritually dead; that he has nothing in him which is pleasing to God, and that consequently he is an outcast from the kingdom of heaven. According to these theories, regeneration, which, in its popular sense, can only by the aid of a subtle analysis be distinguished from conversion, is the creation of a new nature in one who is spiritually dead, whereby the entire man is transformed, by a creative act on the part of God, from what is designated a state of spiritual death into one which is called a state of spiritual life; the change in question being one so distinct and palpable as to be capable of being distinctly perceived by the consciousness of those who experience it, and involving quite as much a creative act as the imparting life to a dead body. Hence the broad distinction which these theories lay down between the converted and the unconverted, the regenerate and the unregenerate man, the one being fit to inherit the perfected kingdom of God, and the other an outcast from it and exposed to all the consequences of the fall.

To theories of this kind, however, the following objections are fatal:—

First: They cannot be found in Scripture.

Secondly: There are numbers of undeniably holy men, men who have sacrificed everything for Christ, and who, by exhibiting in their lives the principles of Christianity, have been what St. Paul calls "Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," who have not passed through the experiences in question. Not a few are there who having been born into the

Church of Christ, and brought up under religious influences, have never been sensible of having experienced such a change of mind, feeling, and character as is denoted by such expressions as passing from a state of spiritual death into one of spiritual life ; and who have never been conscious of a time when they were not the subjects of serious religious impressions, and of whom it cannot be said, as it may be said with truth of heathen converts, and of professing Christians who resemble them, that they have turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Such, then, are the indefinite senses in which St. Paul uses the terms life and death. If the reader will peruse the sixth chapter of this Epistle he will find the word death there used in an equally wide and general sense. Let us now consider its meaning when it is spoken of as the penalty of sin. The following will be sufficient as illustrations :—

“The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal (*aiώνιος*) life in Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. vi. 23.)

“If ye live after the flesh ye must die (*μελλετε ἀποθνήσκειν*, are about to die), but if by the spirit ye mortify [margin, make to die] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Rom. viii. 13.)

In neither of these passages is there any warning given that the words “death” and “to die” are used in any other sense than that in which their Greek equivalents would have been understood by ordinary speakers of Greek ; still less would it have occurred to such that the writer meant his readers to understand by these terms a never-ending existence in torment. Surely, if so fearful a fate was the thing intended, the Apostle would have expressed himself in words the meaning of which was unmistakable, and not have left it as a matter of very uncertain inference.

But in the following passage the meaning of the word "die" is intensified by the context:—

"If ye believe not that I am he," says our Lord, "ye shall die in your sins."

Here it is obvious that if the Divine speaker meant to threaten those whom He was addressing with bodily death, or mere loss of existence, the addition of "in your sins" would have been a pleonasm, because in that case it would matter little whether a man died in sin or died in holiness, for the saint and the sinner would at death pass alike into a state of unconsciousness, undisturbed even by a dream. The threatening of dying in sin unquestionably suggests that the consequences of sin committed here would follow the sinner in the unseen world. At the same time it contains no hint that the consequences of dying in sin, instead of involving death in any ordinary sense of that word, would be never-ending life in never-ending suffering.

It would be easy to adduce numerous other examples of the use of the terms *ζωή* (life) and *θάνατος* (death), and others of kindred meaning, by the sacred writers, which prove that they used them in the wide general sense which they bear in ordinary Greek, and in the corresponding English; but those which I have referred to will, I think, be amply sufficient for that purpose. They prove that it was impossible that the word "death" could have been used by them or understood by those to whom they wrote, in a technical sense, denoting a condition of endless existence in never-ending misery.

IV.—*Απόλεια*, *ἀπόλλυμι*, *σλεθρος*, *ἔξολοθρεύω*, *διαφθείρω*, *ἀποκτείνω*, and other kindred terms.

All these words (to a speaker of Greek) would convey the idea of destruction, or one closely analogous to it; and it is impossible, unless some qualification were added to them

intensifying their meaning, that they could convey any other to an ordinary speaker of the Greek language. I will adduce a few examples of their use by the sacred writers :—

“God,” says our Lord, “is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” Here the Greek word is *ἀπολέσαι*, which corresponds closely in meaning with our English word “destroy.” Who, I ask, could by any possibility have understood this utterance as meaning, God is able to keep alive both soul and body in everlasting misery in Gehenna ?

“He that loveth his life” (the word for life is here *ψυχή*, soul) “shall lose it” [*ἀπολέσει αὐτην*, which strictly rendered is, “shall destroy it”]; “but he that hateth his life (*ψυχή*) in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (*εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, to the age-long life). (John xii. 25.)

Here again the Greek-speaking Christian would understand by the word *ἀπολέσει* the ordinary idea denoted by the term, destroy ; and the word would wholly fail to convey to him that of existence in never-ending torment, without some previous intimation that such was its intended meaning.

Similar, also, is the sense of the words in the two following passages :—

“Broad is the road that leadeth unto destruction, *εἰς ἀπόλειαν*.” (Matt. vii. 13.)

“Vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, *εἰς ἀπόλειαν*.” (Rom. ix. 22.)

No hint is given in either of these passages that the words were not intended to be understood in their ordinary meaning.

So, also, in the following passages :—

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish (*μὴ ἀπολύται*), but have eternal life” (*ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, age-long life). (John iii. 16.)

“For through thy knowledge, he that is weak perisheth

(ἀπόλλειται), the brother for whom Christ died." (1 Cor. viii. 11.)

"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish (ἀπολοῦνται) without law." (Rom. ii. 12.)

Surely in none of these passages would the speaker of Greek understand that the thing intended by the word here used was not perishing or destruction in the ordinary sense of these words, but endless existence in torment, unless there was some intimation in the context that this was the thing intended, or unless the members of the Churches had been previously taught to attach this special technical, but most unnatural, meaning to the words in question.

But in the following passage the meaning slightly differs:—

"The word of the cross is to them that are perishing (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις) foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 18.) Here the words "them that are perishing" evidently denote an act not yet completed; and, as far as the words are concerned, one which may be of long or short duration, but which will ultimately terminate in destruction.

"Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction (οὐλεθόντων αἰώνιον) from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints," &c. (2 Thess. i. 9, 10.)

In this passage the ordinary meaning of the word "destruction" is qualified, not only by the word *aiōnion*, but by the words which precede and follow. The destruction threatened is "destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his might," "at the revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven with the angels of his power, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Who then are the persons against whom this threatening is directed? The context proves that those whom the Apostle had in view, when he wrote this passage, were the persecutors

of the Thessalonian Church. This the preceding context makes certain :—

“ So that we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions, and in the afflictions which ye endure ; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, to the end that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer ; if so be it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you ; and to you that are afflicted rest with us at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven.” (2 Thess. i. 4—7.)

This passage makes it clear that the members of this Church had recently been suffering very heavy persecutions, and that it is against their persecutors that the threatening is immediately directed ; for, says the Apostle, if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense *affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us* at the revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven.” We know also from the First Epistle that both the Apostle and the members of the Thessalonian Church thought that the triumphant manifestation of the kingdom of God, and the personal appearance of Christ to reign in it, was an event not far distant ; and although in his Second Epistle he thought it necessary to warn them that “ *the day of the Lord was not now present*, but that an apostacy would precede its manifestation,” yet it is impossible to reconcile the language which he uses in both these Epistles with the idea that he considered that the coming (*παρουσία*, presence) of the Lord was a remote event, or even that it might not happen during the lifetime of those to whom he was writing. It was with such an expectation then that he wrote the passage before us. Time, however, has proved that both he and the Thessalonian Christians were mistaken in thinking that the personal coming of Christ was thus near ; but on the other hand, a great providential coming, by which

the Jewish dispensation was brought to a close, was an event which was only seventeen years distant. Hence it is that with these views of the nearness of the Advent he speaks of their persecutors as being destroyed from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

But the destruction is described as an act of vengeance. "Rendering vengeance," says he, "to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall suffer punishment." By using these words it is clear that the Apostle did not mean either that their mere exclusion from the presence of the Lord, or their simple annihilation was the thing intended, but that the destruction in question would be a fearful act of retribution.

But in the latter part of the clause, using as he does the words "them that know not God, and them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," he seems to extend the threatened destruction beyond the mere persecutors of the Thessalonian Church. Doubtless he had other persecutors in view, and such enemies of Christ as he refers to in the next chapter; but by the words in question he could not have meant mere ignorant unbelievers—for he had recently declared at Athens that "the times of this ignorance God overlooked"—but direct opponents of Christ and his Gospel.

What then does the Apostle mean, and what did the Thessalonian Christians understand, by the words *aiώνιον ὀλεθρον*, which the Revisers have translated "eternal destruction," thus substituting "eternal" for the "everlasting" of the Authorised Version. The Greek words *ολεθρος*, and *ολλυμι*, from which it is derived, correspond as nearly as possible in meaning with our English words "destruction" and "to destroy," while the qualifying word, *aiώνιος*, is "age-long." Hence it seems impossible that either the Apostle, or those to whom he wrote, could have understood by these words "a never-ending existence in never-ending misery." How is it pos-

sible that by the use of any qualifying adjective the word destruction can be made to mean the everlasting existence of the thing destroyed; that is to say, a destruction which is never realised? As then the former words of the Apostle affirm that "the destruction" which he spoke of would be a terrible act of retribution on the persecutors of whom he spoke and on the deliberate opponents of Christ and His Gospel, so the addition of the qualifying adjective *aiώνιον* can only mean that the threatened "destruction" would be final and complete.

The following passage in the First Epistle proves that the meaning which has been above assigned to the word "destruction" is the one intended by the Apostle.

"But when they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall in no wise escape." (1 Thess. v. 3.)

Would any ordinary speaker of Greek have understood that *aiφνίδιος ὄλεθρος*, i.e. "sudden destruction," meant in this passage "never-ending existence in never-ending misery," unless he had been previously informed that such was the meaning intended by the writer?

The following passage from the parable of the wicked husbandmen illustrates the meaning which the kindred word *ἀπόλλυμι*, to destroy, bears in the sacred writers.

"When therefore the Lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto these husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy these miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him its fruits in their seasons." (Matt. xxi. 40, 41.)

Here it is evident that those who made this reply understood by the words, "He will miserably destroy these miserable men," that the lord of the vineyard would punish these wicked husbandmen by putting them to one of those terrible forms of death which were so common in the ancient world.

Precisely similar is the use in the New Testament of the words *φθορά*, corruption, *διαφθέρω*, to destroy, *έξολοθρεύω*, to destroy utterly, *ἀποκτείνω*, to kill, *κρίσις*, *κρίμα*, *κατάκριμα*, and other kindred terms, all meaning judgment, or condemnation, but never the damnation of popular theology; *ἀναλίσκω*, when applied to persons, to kill or destroy, and *καταργέω*, to make useless or to abolish. To assign to these words, and to the others above referred to, any other meaning than that which they bore in the ordinary Greek which was spoken by the members of different apostolic Churches, is to destroy every principle of sound scriptural interpretation.

My general conclusion with respect to the terminology of the New Testament in relation to future retribution therefore is, that the Greek words which are used by its writers conveyed the same general meaning to a Greek-speaking Christian as the corresponding English ones do to a reader of English; that they are used in their commonly accepted signification, and not in a special or technical sense, which would have been intelligible only to the initiated; that taking them as a whole, they were calculated to convey to the reader the firm persuasion that it was the intention of the writer to affirm that God will execute a righteous judgment on mankind in the world beyond the grave, when he will reward and punish men according to their deeds; and that sin wilfully persisted in will be attended with suffering which will end in the ultimate destruction of the sinner; yet that none of the terms employed in their ordinary or natural meaning convey even a hint that the suffering will be of endless duration. The general idea which they are calculated to suggest to the mind of the reader may be well expressed in the words of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" but they furnish us with no definite information respecting the nature of the sufferings, or the length of time

they will have to be endured. For aught we know, sin wilfully persisted in, *i.e.* evil become inherent and irremediable, which resists every means of cure consistent with the preservation of free agency in a moral being, may bring about the destruction of the sinner in the course of God's ordinary government of the moral and spiritual world, without the necessity of any special intervention on his part, just as disease brings about the destruction of the body under God's ordinary government of the natural world. I do not say that this will be so; but the idea is quite consistent with all we know of the mode of the Divine acting in both the moral and physical universe, in which, under His superintendence and energising providence, all things are made to work out His holy pleasure.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE TEACHING OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES RESPECTING THE NATURE OF FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

HAVING considered the terminology of the New Testament in connection with future retribution, it is now necessary that I should consider its positive affirmations respecting its nature. I shall commence with the three first Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, because beyond all question these Gospels contain an account of our Lord's popular teaching, whereas the fourth Gospel is almost exclusively confined to reporting such of his discourses as were addressed either to his intimate followers or to learned Jews. To these I have added the Acts of the Apostles, because it is not only in reality a continuation of the third Gospel, but it contains an account of the popular teaching of the Apostles.

The teaching of the Gospels respecting retribution is uniformly associated with the great idea which interpenetrates them, viz. that of the kingdom of heaven. Although I have considered the position which this idea occupies in the Scriptures of the New Testament, its nature, and character, in another work,\* it will be necessary before entering on the immediate subject of this chapter to offer a few very brief observations on the important place which it occupies in the apostolic writings. If any of my readers should desire further information on this subject, I must refer them to the

\* "Revelation and Modern Theology Contrasted; or, the Simplicity of the Apostolic Gospel Demonstrated."

work in which I have considered it at length, and given proofs of the positions which I here lay down.

The reader cannot fail to observe that the idea of the kingdom of heaven, or what is synonymous with it, the kingdom of God, is one which underlies the entire Gospels. In St. Matthew's Gospel these words occur no less than forty-one times. Equally numerous are the occasions in which our Lord is described as performing actions which proved Him to be the Christ, *i.e.* the king of the kingdom of God; and in no inconsiderable portion of His teaching He assumes the character of its supreme legislator, and the evangelists not unfrequently describe His entire teaching as a *proclamation* "of the good news" of that kingdom. John the Baptist also commenced his ministry with the proclamation, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So likewise did our Lord. St. Mark thus reports it: "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled (*πεπλήρωται*, *i.e.* filled up full), and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the gospel," *i.e.* in the good news. In like manner, when at a later period of His ministry He sent the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples out on their respective missions, He directed them to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and to enable them to give proof of the truth of their affirmation, He endowed them with the power of working miracles. The same course He pursued throughout His entire ministry, to its very close; for not only are His parables explanations of different aspects of the kingdom of God, and corrections of the popular misconceptions respecting it, but on His triumphal entry into Jerusalem He openly assumed the Messianic title, and allowed Himself to be proclaimed its king; and when the Jewish rulers, a few days afterwards, charged Him before Pilate with going about and saying that He was the Christ, a king, He affirmed that He was a king, but the king of a kingdom not of this world,

but of ~~one~~ which is spiritual and moral, i.e. of the kingdom of God.

The contents of the Gospels, then, may be briefly summed up as consisting of a proclamation of the society destined to be of a kingdom called the kingdom of God, a description of its nature, an enumeration of its principles and its laws and of the necessary qualifications for becoming its subjects, a definition of the character of its King, and a proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth as its King. You ~~may~~ be ~~surely~~ to say, although this forms their subject-matter, and the subject-matter of the teaching of our Lord Himself, the idea of the kingdom of God scarcely finds any place in either systematic or popular theology, but in its place has been substituted a number of abstract dogmas as constituting the essence of Christianity. The point, however, to which it is necessary to draw special attention, in reference to the subject we are considering, is that our Lord's affirmations respecting future retribution are inseparably bound up with the idea of the kingdom of God, as it is explained and illustrated in His teaching.

Let it be observed also that the kingdom of God of the Gospels, and of the Acts of the Apostles, is the same institution as that which is designated the Church in this last book and in the Epistles. In the Gospels it receives the name of the Church twice only; in the Acts of the Apostles the words, the Church and the kingdom of God, are used in nearly equal proportions as designations of the same community; but in the Epistles, while the words "the kingdom of God" are far from wanting, the term Church greatly preponderates.

What, then, is meant by the kingdom of God, the idea of which is thus closely interwoven with the teaching of our Lord and his Apostles? I answer, that it is the designation of that society, the promise of the setting up of which occupies so conspicuous a place in the scriptures of the Old Testament, the advent of which was the subject of eager desire

both prior to and during our Lord's ministry ; which was erected as a visible community on earth on the day of Pentecost, and which will continue to exist until every opposing power has been placed under the feet of the Son of God, after which, the purposes of its institution having been fully realised, the Son will resign the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.

While this is the general meaning of the kingdom of God in the apostolic writings, the reader ought carefully to observe that the sacred writers contemplate it under two aspects.

First—

The kingdom of God of the present dispensation, during the continuance of which the evil will be mingled with the good. This may be properly designated the period of its growth.

Secondly—

That aspect of it which is referred to in various Scriptures when all evil shall be gathered out of it, the complete purposes of its institution realised, and during which all nations will become its subjects. It is to this last state of things that the various affirmations of the Christian Scriptures respecting retribution are directly applicable. The division of the kingdom of Christ into these two æons, or dispensations, is distinctly recognised in the following utterance of St. Paul :—

“ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of the strength of his might, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit on his right hand in the heavenly places ; far above all rule, and authority, and power,

and dominion, *not only in this age, but also in that which is to come* (ἐν τῷ αἰώνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι), and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 17—23.)

The Jews, it is true, appear to have divided time into three ages or dispensations, viz. the patriarchal age, the age of the Mosaic dispensation, and the age to come, or the kingdom of the Messiah; but to neither of the two first of these are the words of the Apostle, "*not only in this age but also in that which is to come*," applicable, for it was only after his resurrection that Jesus Christ was given to be the head over all things to the Church. It follows, therefore, that the words "*not only in this age*" must have been intended by the Apostle to refer to the present Christian dispensation, or the period of the Church's growth, and the age which is to come to the kingdom of Christ in its glorious manifestation. Let it be observed, however, that it is not two, but one and the same kingdom of God, which is referred to both in the Old and the New Testament, the descriptions of it in the former being almost exclusively confined to the period of its glorious manifestation. With these observations let us now consider the direct affirmations of the Gospels respecting future retribution and its nature.

The first reference to it is in the preaching of John the Baptist, in connection with his proclamation of the immediate advent of the kingdom of God. Seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he thus addressed them—

"Ye offspring of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" &c.; and "even now is the axe laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." (Matt. iii. 7, 10.)

Then, speaking of the coming Messiah, he adds—

"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor, and he will gather his wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." (Matt. iii. 12.)

The first question which suggests itself in connection with the Baptist's preaching is : What was the wrath to come which he warned the Pharisees and Sadducees to flee from ? Was it punishment after death, or was it that terrible overthrow of the Jewish Church and nation which took place some forty years afterwards, when the kingdom of God was finally taken from them and given to the Gentiles ?

I answer that the Baptist described the wrath to come, which he warned those whom he was addressing to flee from, under two metaphors.

First, The act of cutting down a fruitless tree, and the casting it into the fire ; and,

Secondly, The act of the winnower, who carefully separates the wheat from the chaff, the first of which he gathers into his barn, and the last he burns with unquenchable fire.

Both of these metaphors denote destruction, and, as applied to sentient beings, painful destruction ; yet, even if this threatening be supposed to apply to any judgment executed beyond the grave on those whom he addressed, it is simply impossible that those who heard it could have understood that either metaphor could have been intended to mean endless existence in never-ending torment, without some intimation on the part of the speaker that such was the intended meaning of the warning. A fire may be unquenchable, but at the same time utterly destructive of that which is cast into it. Besides, both the tree and the chaff are described as cast into the fire and burnt, *i.e.* consumed. Both metaphors are exactly suited to convey the idea of destruction, but neither of them could possibly suggest that of everlasting existence in torment.

Similar but still more terrible denunciations, uttered by our Lord against the scribes and Pharisees, are recorded in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew—perhaps the most awful utterances in the New Testament. One of these denunciations is as follows :—

“ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ; for ye enter not yourselves, neither suffer them that are entering to enter.”  
(Matt. xxiii. 13.)

I draw special attention to this passage because it proves beyond dispute that the kingdom of heaven, which these scribes and Pharisees were capable of shutting against men, cannot possibly mean that kingdom in its future glorious manifestation, or the place popularly designated “ heaven,” or, as the kingdom of heaven is sometimes understood to mean, a certain condition of mind and character ; for neither of these had either scribe or Pharisee any power to shut against men ; but that kingdom of God into which men are now capable of entering, viz. the Messianic kingdom, which our Lord had again and again declared to be one of the great purposes of His mission to set up.

The only passage in this awful chapter which can be supposed to be a reference to a future state of retribution is the following :—

“ Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna !”  
(Matt. xxiii. 33.)

The meaning of the words, “ the judgment of Gehenna,” we will consider presently. Before doing so, however, I must ask the reader’s attention to the concluding words of this terrible denunciation :—

“ Therefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes ; and some of them shall ye kill, and crucify ; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city ; that upon you may come all the

righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous, unto the blood of Zachariah the son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. *Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.* O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto her ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. xxiii. 34—38.)

These words prove conclusively that the prominent idea in the mind of the Divine speaker, throughout this discourse, was that terrible destruction—perhaps the most awful in the history of the world—which overtook the Jewish nation when the old dispensation was brought to its final termination by that great visitation of Providence which rendered the celebration of its rites and ceremonies impossible for the future, and the Church of Jesus Christ was for ever separated from Judaism, and set up as a distinct and visible community on earth. The judgment spoken of in this concluding passage is evidently a temporal and national judgment, because our Lord expressly says, that all the past sins of the Jewish people would be visited on that generation, and not a judgment to be executed on men as individuals. Nations do not exist beyond the grave ; and, therefore, if their sins are visited upon them—and all history proves that they are—the judgments with which they are visited must be temporal judgments, brought on in the ordinary course of Providence, in which alone it is that the iniquities of ancestors can, in conformity with Divine justice, be visited on their descendants ; because, whatever has the appearance of injustice in such judgments, *taken by themselves*, or in the general course of Divine Providence, will receive its vindication when God judges in righteousness men as individuals, by that man whom He hath ordained.

In the following passages our Lord threatens certain sins with the judgment of Gehenna, which in both versions is unfortunately translated hell.

"I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell [i.e. the Gehenna] of fire" (*τίν γεένναν τοῦ πυρός*). (Matt. v. 22.)

"And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." (Matt. v. 29, 30.) Here, again, the word rendered hell is Gehenna.

A similar utterance is recorded by St. Mark, with the following variations:—

"It is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands to go into hell [Gehenna], into the unquenchable fire.\* . . . It is good for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell [Gehenna] where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." (Mark ix. 43—48.)

In these utterances our Lord addresses men as individuals, and these warnings are beyond all doubt couched in language which is highly metaphorical. In the first of them our Lord threatens three classes of sinners with three kinds of punishment, varying in degree, analogous to those which could be

\* In the Authorised Version the words *τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀσθετόν*, are inaccurately translated, "the fire that never shall be quenched." The Greek says nothing about the future; strictly rendered it is "the fire the unquenchable." The idea suggested by being cast into a fire which is unquenchable is destruction which is utter and complete.

inflicted by three Jewish courts of justice. These punishments, beyond a doubt, bore a meaning which was well known to his hearers, but, in our ignorance of their precise nature, they are somewhat obscure to us. Our Lord, however, evidently intended to convey the idea of gradation in future punishment, the last one threatened being the most terrible, being analogous to what his hearers understood by the "Gehenna of fire." In the second passage above quoted, the threatening, freed from metaphor, affirms that it is profitable for a man to get rid of a passion prompting him to sin, however loved, by any means however violent, rather than that the whole man should be cast into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire, to which in the second clause is added, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched;" on the same principle that a man would prefer to part with his right eye, or his right hand, rather than that his whole body should be cast into it.

What, then, did our Lord mean, and what did his hearers understand, by the words, "the Gehenna of fire"?

The words, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," are evidently an allusion to the following passage in Isaiah:—

"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me" (*i.e.* at Jerusalem) "saith the Lord; and they shall go forth, and shall look at the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (Isaiah lxvi. 23, 24.)

In this passage it is obvious that not living beings but dead carcases are spoken of as a prey of the worm that never dies and of the fire which is never quenched. Such imagery, however, was one pre-eminently fitted to impress a Jew, a Greek, or a Roman with the idea of all that is terrible in death—for nothing was more abhorrent to their feelings

than that the bodies of the dead should remain unburied ; and, consequently, to convey to those who heard the utterance we are considering, the idea that some terrible form of destruction awaited wilful sinners in the unseen world.

It is important to observe that the word Gehenna, here translated "hell," is neither more nor less than the name of a valley situated a short distance from Jerusalem. To a Jew it conveyed the idea of everything which was odious, for it had not only been the scene of the Moloch worship of former times, in which living victims were consumed in the fire, but it had subsequently become the place to which all the dead carcases and filth of Jerusalem were carried. We are informed by Jewish writers that a fire was here kept continually burning for the purpose of consuming them, but their authority for this assertion is doubtful. We are likewise told that the Jews viewed the scenes enacted in this valley as symbolical of the punishment which awaited the wicked in the underworld. Be this as it may, the language is evidently symbolical—it is impossible to express truth respecting the unseen world except in symbolical language ;—but the symbols were fitted to impress those who heard our Lord with the awful consequences with which sin unrepented of will be attended hereafter. Still there is nothing in the symbols used which suggests the idea that the fate of such sinners would be a conscious existence in torments which would never end. On the contrary, the imagery suggests that of ultimate destruction ; and it is difficult to see how in the ordinary use of language they can bear any other signification ; for it by no means follows because a fire is unquenchable that the same victim will continue to burn in it for ever, or, because a worm will never die, that it will continue to prey for ever on the same carcase. It has been urged that the worm that never dies is a metaphor to denote an ever-gnawing conscience ; but although such a meaning may suggest itself to

philosophers and divines in their closets, it is most unlikely that it would have done so to the promiscuous multitudes whom our Lord was addressing. Both words must be alike symbolical or alike literal ; and however they may be understood, they can only denote ultimate destruction.

St. Matthew records the following utterance of our Lord, which throws considerable light on the metaphorical language we have been considering :—

“ Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. . . . And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee ; it is good for thee to enter into life (*εἰς τὴν ζωὴν*) maimed or halt, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire (*τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον*). And if thy eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee, it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into the hell of fire” (*εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός*, into the Gehenna of fire). (Matt. xviii. 6—9.)

No one can entertain a doubt that the language of this passage is highly metaphorical, and that it is intended to be an impressive warning, to those who are guilty of tempting others into such courses, of the consequences with which that sin will be attended ; the words *τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον*, and *τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός*, bearing the same meaning as in the preceding utterances. But the words to which I would draw the reader's particular attention are the following : “ Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.” Such a fate would be a far lighter doom than to be cast into “ the eternal fire,” or “ the Gehenna of

fire ;" but the words contain no hint that our Lord intended by them to teach that the punishment of such a sin would be a never-ending existence in never-ending torment. No words could have been less likely to suggest this idea than that it is profitable for a man to have a great millstone hanged about his neck and he be cast into the depth of the sea ; the former denoting terrible suffering which will be endless and hopeless, and the latter a pain, probably not severe, which will terminate in five minutes, or even less. Surely if our Lord had intended it to be understood that the punishment of such a sinner would be endless existence in never-ending torment, He would have said so plainly.

The following are denunciations against sin wilfully persisted in :—

1. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction" (*eis τὴν ἀπώλειαν*). (Matt. vii. 13.)
2. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy (*ἀπολέσαι*) both soul and body in Gehenna." (Matt. x. 28.)
3. "Except ye repent, ye shall in like manner perish" (*ἀπολεῖσθε*). (Luke xiii. 3.)
4. "And it shall be, that every soul which shall not hearken to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed (*ξολοθρευθῆσεται*) from among the people." (Acts iii. 23.)
5. "Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish" (*αφανίσθητε*). (Acts xiii. 41.)

All the Greek terms here used denote what in popular English we mean by the word "destruction." They say nothing as to whether the process of destruction will be long or short, but they imply that it will be a painful one. No ordinary speaker of Greek could have understood them in any other sense without being warned that a different meaning was intended to be attached to them. Few expressions could have been less adapted to convey to the hearer the idea of a

conscious existence in never-ending torment. From the second of these passages we learn that our Lord used "Gehenna" as a symbol of the place of the future punishment of the wicked; and from the fourth, that the destruction of those spoken of would be utter and complete.

The two following passages present us with the same subject from a different point of view:—

1. "Agree with thine adversary quickly whiles thou art with him in the way, lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the last farthing." (Matt. v. 25, 26.)

2. "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." (Matt. xviii. 34, 35.)

The language of these passages is metaphorical, the metaphor in the first being derived from the mode in which judges in those days dealt with debtors; and in the second, from the mode in which masters punished their slaves, even those of the highest rank. These practices were beyond all doubt well known to our Lord's hearers, and He uses them as illustrations of the consequences which will overtake sin, wilfully persisted in, in the unseen world. It should be observed, also, that the word *βασανιστής*, "tormentor," does not necessarily mean in the Greek language one who actually inflicts tortures, but the keeper of a prison, the term being applied to him because he not unfrequently acted in the capacity of torturer.

The expressions, "Till thou hast paid the last farthing," and "Till he should pay all that was due," have been very generally understood as affirmations that the punishment alluded to will know no termination throughout the eternity

to come, on the ground that it is impossible for any sinner to pay the debt which he owes to Divine justice. But before these words can be made to bear this meaning, it must first be proved that suffering which will never terminate is the just punishment of a finite sin, such as an unforgiving temper, which is the sin referred to in the context. God will certainly judge the world in righteousness, and will therefore proportion the punishment to the guilt of the transgressor. The expressions used imply that the punishment of impenitent sinners will be severe ; but they convey no hint that it will know no termination. I am aware that it has been urged that because God is infinite and man finite, therefore every offence of man deserves an infinite punishment ; but the argument is equally valid to prove that because man is finite every offence of a finite being can only merit a finite punishment, and that when the punishment which is due to the transgression has been undergone, the debt due to Divine justice has been discharged. The argument on both sides, let it be observed, is founded on considerations of justice alone, leaving out all those which appeal to the Divine mercy and compassion. It is true that in both metaphors the two persons referred to are represented as having incurred debts ; but the relation between a human creditor and a debtor very imperfectly represents the relation which exists between God and man. In both cases the creditor is represented as shutting up the debtor in prison until he should pay the debt, which in the latter case was an enormous one, thus rendering it impossible that he should do so, unless some friend interfered in his behalf. This the humanity of modern legislation justly forbids ; and it is impossible that man can be more merciful than God. The truth is, that man's violations of the laws of God are not debts, but sins ; and the punishment inflicted on the transgression is not the mere payment of a debt, but the penalty due to sin.

St. Luke records the following important utterance of our Lord :—

“ And that servant which knew his lord’s will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes ; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required ; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.”  
(Luke xii. 47, 48.)

Here we are again obviously in the region of metaphor. The servants in great men’s houses in those days were slaves, even the one here referred to as the steward ; and for slaves, the well-known instrument of punishment was the scourge. The steward-slave of the parable, who, having been set over his fellow-slaves during his lord’s absence, had been guilty of tyranny, gluttony, and drunkenness, is on his return sentenced to be severely scourged, and others who had done things worthy of stripes to be scourged, but with far less severity.

What then does this parable teach with respect to retribution in the unseen world ? I answer, that God, in administering justice hereafter, will not punish all sins alike ; but that his punishments will be proportioned to the degree of the guilt. Hardened sinners will be punished with great severity ; sinners far less guilty will receive a punishment which will be comparatively mild. One thing is certain, the symbol “ shall be beaten with few stripes ” cannot possibly denote a conscious existence in a misery which will never end ; for although the suffering at any particular instant may be mild compared with that of the sinner to whom much has been entrusted, and who has shamefully abused his trust, yet if it has neither end nor hope of termination, it is impossible that the symbol “ shall be beaten with few stripes ” can be any adequate representation of its awful reality. Let

it also be observed that the entire passage does not contain a hint that the punishment with which it threatens sinners is a never-ending existence in torment, though the punishment with which the great sinner is threatened is an awful one.

Again, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." The Divine speaker adds, "Let both" (*i.e.* the wheat and the tares) "grow together unto the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." He then explains the parable as follows: "The field is the world (*ὁ κόσμος*), the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom, and the tares are the sons of the evil-one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil, the harvest is *the consummation of the age* (*συντέλεια τοῦ αἰώνος*), and the reapers are angels. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burnt with fire, so shall it be *at the consummation of the age*. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt. xiii. 24—43.)

This parable and its explanation form one of the most important utterances of our Lord respecting future retribution. The kingdom of heaven is here divided into two æons, viz. the period of its growth, and the period when it will have realised the object of its institution. Wheat is used as the emblem of the righteous, and tares as the emblem of the evil. During the period of growth, *i.e.* during the present dispensation, the wheat and the tares, *i.e.* the righteous and the wicked, are to grow together in the kingdom of God. Then

comes another dispensation, beginning with what is called in the parable the harvest, and in its explanation the consummation of the age. In this a separation between the wheat and the tares is destined to take place ; the wheat will be gathered into the householder's barn, and the tares will be gathered together in bundles and burnt.

Our Lord explains that by the field in which the seed was sown he meant the world (*κόσμος*), that the good seed denoted the sons of the kingdom, and the tares the sons of the evil-one ; and that just as tares are collected together and consumed with fire at the time of harvest, so those that cause stumbling, and those that do iniquity, will be gathered out of his kingdom and cast into the furnace of fire at the consummation of the age ; and the righteous will then shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

What then do these symbols imply respecting the punishment which awaits the finally impenitent at the consummation of the present Christian dispensation ? As the tares are collected and burnt, so the wicked will be collected and cast, not into *a furnace of fire*, as in the Authorised Version, but into *the furnace of fire*, as in the Revised, the use of the article showing that some definite furnace was referred to—probably the Gehenna of fire referred to in our Lord's previous teaching, or such a furnace as is mentioned in the Book of Daniel. Whatever may be the absolute reality thus symbolised, it is simply impossible that the imagery of the parable or of its explanation could have suggested to our Lord's hearers that the thing threatened was an endless existence in never-ending torment. The meaning which it was calculated to convey was that at the consummation of the age some terrible form of destruction would overtake evil-doers ; and the final warning, “There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth,” undoubtedly implied that the destruction would not be an instantaneous one, but one which

would be gradual in its operation. The expression “the weeping and the gnashing of teeth,” ὁ κλαῦθμος καὶ ὁ βρύγμος τῶν ὁδόντων (let the reader observe the double article) was a symbol repeatedly used by our Lord in reference to those who will be finally shut out from the perfected kingdom of God. The use of the double article proves that the thing alluded to by these words was something well-known to our Lord’s hearers; but all we can now do is to conjecture what was the thing intended, the image being apparently that of a set of hungry persons who, by their own fault, were shut out from a feast of which they were the spectators. The symbol employed was one well fitted to convey to our Lord’s hearers the intimation that the destruction threatened would not be instantaneous, but on the contrary would be a prolonged period of misery, during which profound regret would be felt for past folly—a condition which the idea of weeping is calculated to convey—and remorse for the loss of happiness that might have been attained—an idea which is suggested by the words “the gnashing of teeth.”

We have similar imagery in the parable of the drag-net—

“So,” says our Lord in his explanation of it, “shall it be at the consummation of the age. The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be *the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.*” (Matt. xiii. 49, 50.)

This last symbol is used in the parable of the marriage feast in reference to the man who presumed to enter without having on a wedding garment.

“Friend,” says the king, “how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to his servants, Bind him hand and foot and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. xxii. 12, 13.)

Here the symbol “the outer darkness” is evidently the

darkness outside the guest-chamber in the king's palace, and the weeping and the gnashing of teeth denotes the despair of one who, through his own fault, was excluded from participating in the feast ; but the parable contains no hint that the thing threatened was endless life in misery.

Again : "Therefore I say unto you, Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come," *ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰώνι οὐτε εν τῷ μελλοντί*, in this age, nor in the coming one. (Matt. xii. 31, 32.)

This utterance is thus reported by St. Mark—

"Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. But whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness (*οὐκ ἔχει ἀφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰώνα*), but is guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark iii. 28, 29.)

The reader should observe that the passage in Mark presents two readings, one which has been adopted by the Revisers, "an eternal sin" (*αἰώνιον ἀμαρτίματος*), and the other (*αἰώνιον κρισέως*), which has been adopted by the Authorised Version, which is there translated "eternal damnation," but which really means eternal judgment, the manuscript authority for the reading *ἀμαρτίματος* being stronger than for that of *κρισέως*.\*

\* This diversity of reading proves that it is impossible to base an important truth on any mere isolated statement of the sacred writings. Critics have laid down certain rules by which they judge which out of a variety of readings found in existing manuscripts were the actual words written by the sacred writer. These rules, though admirable in their way, are by no means infallible, for inasmuch as our oldest manuscripts date no earlier than from the fourth century, it is quite possible—nay, it is highly probable—that in the course of transcription, errors may have been introduced into the manuscripts of the third, second, and even in those of the latter part of the first century, which have become stereotyped in our present manuscripts; and that now and then a word in an apostolic autograph, may have been inadvertently substituted for another.

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

The utterance as reported by St. Matthew simply affirms that those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven, neither "in this age," *i.e.* the then existing age, nor in the age to come. These words, therefore, simply affirm that the blasphemer against the Holy Spirit will not obtain forgiveness under either dispensation, but they give no hint that the punishment will be an endless existence in torment.

But what if the reading "eternal sin" is the correct representation of our Lord's utterance? This reading has been preferred by many, not only on account of its superior manuscript authority, but because the words "eternal sin" are supposed to aid in getting rid of some of the difficulties with which the idea of a never-ending punishment as the penalty of a finite sin is attended. Thus it is argued that if a sinner continues to sin endlessly, it will be consistent with justice to punish him endlessly. Yet if it be granted that the word "sin" and not "judgment" is the true reading in St. Mark, we have no right to assume that he has reported our Lord's utterance more correctly than St. Matthew. But even if St. Mark wrote the words "guilty of an eternal sin," there is no reason why they should be understood as affirming that the blasphemer will go on sinning for ever. To be guilty of an eternal sin, and to be guilty of eternal sinning, are two very different ideas, the first denoting a completed act, and the second a continuous set of actions, which, on the assumption that the word "eternal" means "never-ending," are a set of actions destined never to be completed. How it is possible by any single act to be guilty of eternal sinning is difficult to comprehend, except on the assumption that the utterance is intended to affirm that God will punish the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit by consigning him who is guilty of it to a state in which he will of necessity go on sinning for ever as the penalty for his offence. Can this be true of Him who willeth not the death of the sinner, but who desireth rather

that he should turn from his sin and live? But the words "guilty of an eternal sin" denote a completed act, *i.e.* an act which is lasting in its consequences. As such they convey the same meaning as those in St. Matthew, "shall not be forgiven, neither in this age nor in the age to come."

But with respect to the general question, it is difficult to see what is gained by substituting the words "eternal sin" for "eternal judgment." If it is intended to affirm that those innumerable multitudes of men which popular theology designates the wicked will be consigned as a punishment for sin committed here to a condition in which they will be guilty of sinning for evermore, or even if this fate is reserved for those only who are guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to reconcile such a state of things with St. Paul's assertion that there is a time coming in the future when all the enemies of Jesus Christ will be placed in subjection under his feet, and when God will be all in all. How is it possible, I ask, that "God can be all in all" if beings will exist sinning against Him everlasting? The subjection of all things to Jesus Christ and God's becoming all in all can be effected by the destruction of those who are incurably wicked, and by the drawing to Christ of those who are not, by His divinely attractive power. "I," says He, "if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." Such an affirmation is inconsistent with the widespread idea that He will attract to Himself only that small fraction of the human race which certain systems of popular theology designate the elect, and that the non-elect will be consigned to a condition in which they will be guilty of ceaseless sinning, and therefore of justly incurring the penalty of everlasting suffering.

Let us turn now to the parable of Dives and Lazarus.

This parable being one of considerable length, instead of quoting it I must ask the reader to peruse it in either of the

two versions. It will be necessary to consider it in some detail, because it has been often treated as though its imagery was intended to be a revelation of realities as they exist in the unseen world, and some have even viewed it as almost a history of actual occurrences. St. Luke, it is true, does not affirm that it is a parable; but neither does he do so of several of our Lord's previous utterances which are unquestionably parables. I shall assume, therefore, that it is one, and, like all other parables, that it was intended to impress on those who heard it a moral lesson, which in the parable before us is twofold:

First, that men will be responsible in the unseen world for their conduct here.

Secondly, that those whom the great truths of revelation fail to bring to repentance would not be brought to repentance by those signs which our Lord's opponents were constantly demanding of Him, even if one of them should be of so awful a character as the appearance of one from the unseen world testifying of its realities from his own personal experience of them.

The narrative being a parable, it is impossible that its imagery can have been intended to be a revelation of the secrets of the underworld. If we accept one part of it as such we ought in consistency to accept the whole, and this none of its expositors do. It is worthy of remark that its imagery bears no resemblance to that of the Hades of the Old Testament, but a closer one to those descriptions of Hades which were current among the Greeks, in which, as in the parable, there were two departments—an Elysium for the blest, and a Tartarus, or place of fiery punishment, for the evil. Though it is impossible to determine with certainty whence the imagery was derived, there can be little doubt that it was current with the scribes and Pharisees, who, together with our Lord's disciples, are stated by the Evangelist to

have formed the auditory to whom this and the preceding parables were addressed, the imagery of our Lord's parables being habitually taken from things with which his hearers were familiar.

The following considerations prove that the imagery of the parable was not intended to be a description of the realities of the unseen world :—

1. Concerning those realities the New Testament is elsewhere profoundly silent. It is therefore incredible, if it had been intended to make a revelation of them, that it should have been done in a parable and not in the way of direct affirmation.

2. The imagery itself is inconsistent with the idea that it was intended to be descriptive of realities, for it represents both Dives and Lazarus as still possessing bodies in the underworld similar to those which they possessed on earth. Thus Dives, though described as a personality which had recently passed from the body, is yet depicted as having eyes and a tongue, and as being in anguish in a burning fire : a description inapplicable to a disembodied spirit. Lazarus, also, is described as having a finger, which Dives entreats Abraham to allow him to dip in water for the purpose of cooling his burning tongue. In fact, the entire imagery presupposes that both Abraham, Lazarus, and Dives are still in the body, and surrounded by bodily conditions.

3. The two compartments of Hades are depicted as visible from one another, so that the blessed witnessed the sufferings of the lost, and the lost the felicity of the blessed ; but between them lies an impassable gulf, yet not so wide but to admit of their conversing with one another.

4. The prayer of Dives is represented as addressed to a departed saint, who is described as receiving it without rebuke. No other hint is to be found in the New Testament that such a thing is possible, and, assuming it to be so, it

would form a justification of numerous superstitions of the Church of Rome.

5. Dives is described as far from being lost to all good. He possesses at least one estimable trait, for, if nothing can be done to relieve his present anguish, he is anxious for his five brothers, who by their conduct were in danger of sharing his awful fate ; he therefore prays Abraham to send Lazarus to warn them of their danger. This remnant of good feeling in him is consistent with the idea that his sufferings were intended to be remedial ; but it is inconsistent with the popular notion that all good has so utterly perished in one whom it designates a lost soul that he is the just subject of punishment without end and without hope. I am aware that it has been urged that his solicitude for his brethren was purely selfish, arising from a fear that if they should come to the same place of torment as himself, they would add to his misery by reproaching him that by his bad example and seductions he had been the means of bringing them into this condition of misery and ruin. But with respect to this theory it will be sufficient to say that the parable does not contain a hint that such was his motive. Surely, while any good remains in a man he must be still the subject of the Divine compassion, and therefore his condition cannot be irremediable.

For these reasons it seems impossible that the imagery of the parable can have been intended to be descriptive of the realities of the unseen world. It therefore adds nothing to our knowledge of the nature of future retribution beyond that which is afforded by the Scriptures we have been considering.

It has been objected to the view above taken, that it is inconceivable that our Lord should have used the imagery in question, if he had not intended to give his sanction to it as descriptive of the realities of the condition of departed spirits after death. To this I answer, that parables are only intended

to enforce the truth of the moral which they illustrate, and not to guarantee that of the imagery by which it is illustrated. This important fact has been too often neglected by interpreters of our Lord's parables—a neglect of which that of the Good Samaritan is a striking example. Our Lord himself has given us its moral, but its imagery has been often interpreted as if it were intended to be descriptive of certain truths which have not the remotest connection with it and of which the parable itself gives no hint. This habit of interpreters of Scripture is neither more nor less than, when they do not find it, as they think, sufficiently edifying, to endeavour to make it more so, by reading into it their own systems of theology and then persuading themselves that they have found them there. The imagery of the parable of the Unjust Steward forms no vindication of his dishonest practices.

Turning next to the parables of the Ten Virgins, the Talents, the Sheep and the Goats, and of the Pounds, I again must ask the reader to peruse them in one of the two versions.

The three first of these form a continuous whole with our Lord's great eschatological discourse, as it is recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, but they are omitted in their report of it by both St. Mark and St. Luke. They are parables descriptive of different aspects of the kingdom of heaven. In the first, the virgins who came prepared with a sufficient supply of oil for their lamps enter at once with the bridegroom into the marriage feast, on which the door is shut. Afterwards the five foolish ones, *having obtained the necessary supply of oil*, pray that the door might be opened to give them admittance, but the bridegroom replies that he knows them not. The moral of the parable is drawn by our Lord Himself: "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." Nothing is said respecting the subsequent fate of the foolish virgins, who are described as returning after they had procured the

necessary supply of oil, except that, notwithstanding their earnest entreaties, they were excluded from the marriage feast. The advice given them to purchase the needful oil, and the fact that they succeeded in so doing, proves that it is impossible to erect a dogma on the mere imagery of a parable.

The moral of the parable of the Talents is that men will be made responsible hereafter for their conduct here, and will be rewarded or punished according to the use which they have made of the various gifts with which they have been entrusted. It is illustrated by the supposed case of a traveller who, on his return from a distant journey, demands of his slaves an account of the use which they had made of the various sums of money which he had committed to them to trade with. Of these, two had made one hundred per cent. profit on the sums entrusted to them, and they are rewarded with a greatly increased trust, and a share in their master's pleasures. But a slave who had made no use of his money, but simply returned what he had received, is not only deprived of the sum committed to him, but ordered to be bound hand and foot and to be cast into the darkness outside the lighted festal chamber, where would be "*the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.*"

The parable of the Pounds, which is recorded by St. Luke, bears a close resemblance to that of the Talents, but the Evangelist informs us that the special purpose for which it was uttered was to correct a widespread misapprehension of our Lord's hearers that the kingdom of God, in its glorious manifestation, was then going to appear. With this purpose in view he represents the great man, like the Herodian princes, as going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. During his absence he intrusts each of his ten slaves with a mina (incorrectly translated "pound"), with which they were to trade. Here a number of enemies are introduced into the imagery of the parable, who do their

best to induce the overlord to refuse him institution into his kingdom. They fail, however, to effect their purpose, and the nobleman returns as king. Thereupon he demands of his slaves an account of the use which they had made of their respective minas, and rewards those who had respectively made by trading one thousand and five hundred per cent., with the government of as many cities as they had gained minas. One slave had made no use of his money, and he directs that it should be taken from him and given to him who had employed that with which he had been entrusted to the greatest advantage. Then follows the sentence which he pronounces on his avowed enemies : " Those mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them ; bring hither, and slay them before me." (Luke xix. 12—27.)

While each of these parables is unquestionably intended to teach that retribution for his conduct here will follow man in the unseen world, not one of them drops a hint that the punishment of the wicked will be a never-ending existence in endless misery. On the contrary, the parable of the Pounds implies, that the fate of those who are irreclaimable enemies of Christ will be ultimate destruction ; but all these parables are silent on the subject of duration.

The parable of the Sheep and the Goats is attended with difficulties which require a careful consideration. It is evidently a parable like the two preceding ones, and it is impossible that it can be, as it is regarded by many, an actual description of the process which will take place on what is usually designated " the day of judgment," when, according to the popular conceptions of it, those countless multitudes of mankind who have existed in the past, who exist in the present, and who will exist in the future, will be raised from the dead and will stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. That this parable was not intended to be descriptive of such a scene is clear from the following considerations :—

It contains no reference to a resurrection, which is not even once referred to throughout the entire discourse of which it forms the conclusion. The persons described as standing before the throne are not "*all that are in the tombs*," but "*all the nations*,"  $\pi\acute{a}n\tau\alpha\ \tau\grave{a}\ \epsilon\theta\nu\eta$ , words which the Revisers have translated in nearly every other place in the New Testament, "*the Gentiles*," a term which is uniformly used by the sacred writers to denote Gentiles in contrast to men of Jewish race, or to members of the Church.\* The principles on which the latter will be judged are laid down in the two preceding parables; but the language of this third parable implies that those whom our Lord describes himself as judging were not members of the Church, for not only do the words  $\pi\acute{a}n\tau\alpha\ \tau\grave{a}\ \epsilon\theta\nu\eta$ , in accordance with the usage of the writers of the New Testament, denote Gentiles in contrast to Christians, but it is impossible that any Christian saint could have been ignorant that works of mercy rendered to the least of those whom the Judge designates his brethren, would be accepted by Him as done to Himself. Yet when He tells those who are placed on His right hand, that when hungry they had given Him meat, when thirsty they had given Him drink, when a stranger they had taken Him in, when naked they had clothed Him, when sick they had visited Him, and when in prison they had come unto Him, their answer implies that they were ignorant that good deeds done to others would be esteemed by the Judge as done to Himself.

What then is the leading idea of the parable? I answer: that the principle on which those who have not had the

\* Of the usage above referred to the following are examples:—Matt. vi. 33, x. 1, xii. 19—21, xviii. 19, xx. 25. Luke ii. 32, xviii. 32, xxi. 24, xxii. 25. Acts ix. 15, xi. 1—8, xiii. 46, xiv. 2, 5, 28, xv. 3, 7, 14, xviii. 7, xxi. 21—25, xxii. 21, xxvi. 17, xxviii. 20—28. Rom. i. 13, ii. 14—24, ix. 30, xi. 13—26, xv. 12, 16, 19, 29. These references will be sufficient as examples. It will be, therefore, needless to refer to every passage in which the words  $\tau\grave{a}\ \epsilon\theta\nu\eta$  are similarly translated in the remaining epistles.

benefit of a divine revelation will be judged hereafter, is the presence or absence in the individual of a spirit of love, mercy, and compassion. But, inasmuch as the Judge is assumed to be a righteous Judge, those who will be condemned for the absence of these qualities cannot be such as were incapable of feeling them, owing to an evil nature transmitted from their ancestors, or to the nature of the environment in which they were born and educated (vast numbers of savages are such); but those in whom they have become extinct, by a voluntary course of evil actions. Respecting the sentence which will be pronounced on those who have been born into such unfavourable conditions, or whether, taking them into His merciful consideration, they may not be among the number of those whom He will place on His right hand, the parable is silent. One thing, however, we know for certain, that the Judge of all the earth will certainly do right; and therefore that in executing judgment on those innumerable multitudes of mankind who have been born and educated under these evil influences, He will hold them accountable only for what they have had, and will not hold them accountable for what they have not had.

The sentence passed on those on His left hand is as follows:—

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire (*εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον*), which is [Greek, *has been*] prepared for the devil and his angels.” The Judge then proceeds to give the reason for this sentence, viz. that those thus condemned had neglected every one of the duties which those on His right hand had performed; and on their remonstrating that they had never thus neglected Him, He repeats the assurance that those who had thus neglected His brethren were in His estimation guilty of neglecting even Himself. Then follow the words—

“These shall go away into punishment eternal (*εἰς κόλασιν*

*aiώνιον*), but the righteous into life eternal" (*εἰς ζωήν aiώνιον*). (Matt. xxv. 46.)

The reader should notice the emphasis which in the Greek is laid on the words "the eternal fire," of the preceding clause, the article being prefixed to both the adjective *aiώνιον* and to the substantive *πῦρ*. This proves that the fire in question was a fire well known to our Lord's hearers, viz. the Gehenna referred to in His preceding teaching. Fire, when used in Scripture as a metaphor, bears two significations, which differ widely from each other, usually denoting an instrument of destruction but more rarely one of purification. The fire referred to in this passage, being described as prepared for the devil and his angels, shows that it is used in the former sense; in fact, when it is used to denote an instrument of purification there is usually something in the context which shows that such is its intended meaning. But although this fire, as far as its duration is concerned, may mean whatever is denoted by the word *aiώνιος*,—which, when it refers to duration, is best represented in English by the word "age-long,"—there is nothing in the words themselves to imply that those cast into it will continue to exist for ever in it, or that they will not be ultimately destroyed by it, though the words certainly imply that their destruction will be a terrible one.

We must now consider the meaning of the concluding words:—

"These shall go away into eternal punishment (*εἰς κόλασιν aiώνιον*), but the righteous into eternal life" (*εἰς ζωήν aiώνιον*). Let it be observed that the *κόλασιν aiώνιον* into which those on the left hand of the Judge are described as going, is evidently the same thing as is denoted in the preceding sentence by the words, *τὸ πῦρ τὸ aiώνιον*, the "fire which is eternal, prepared for the devil and his angels."

It has been urged that if the word *aiώνιος* in this passage, when united with *κόλασις* and *πῦρ*, does not denote a state of punishing (I advisedly use the word punishing, because the word punishment denotes a completed act) which will have no termination, then the same word when united to *ζωή*, life, gives no assurance to the righteous of a life which will never end. I fully admit that the word *aiώνιος*, when united with *ζωή*, life, must have the same meaning as it bears when it is in the same sentence united with the words *κόλασις*, or *πῦρ*. But there is this difference between the two cases. When the æon, or æons, denoted by the word *aiώνιος*, are coming to a close, all holy beings will still be able to look up to Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty, as the unchangeable father of mercies and the God of all comfort, and as in His essential being, love; and their "*abiding in love*," causing them to abide in God and God in them, affords the strongest ground for trust that their life with God will never end. Full well, therefore, may they be satisfied during the æons of the future with living in that state of hope and trust in God in which the saints of the Old Testament lived and died, though its pages contain no express revelation of a life to come. Yet, as we have seen, not a few of the most enlightened saints of that dispensation entertained the firmest faith, notwithstanding the clouds and darkness with which God's present providences were enshrouded, that it would be finally well with those who loved God, and who lived in obedience to His laws. Why, then, should not the inheritor of the perfected kingdom of God be satisfied with the same assurance as supported his Jewish brother during the age in which he lived, that God, who is unchangeable in His perfections, will never desert them that love Him throughout all the ages of the future, when, to use the words of the Apostle, "*God will be all in all?*" This is an assurance on which we may rely with far more fulness of conviction

than on a word which varies so greatly in meaning as the word *aiώνιος*, "eternal."

With respect to the word "fire," I have taken it for granted, in accordance with the almost unanimous opinion of modern commentators, that it is used in a metaphorical sense throughout our Lord's discourses ; and that it is not intended to affirm that sinners, whether in the body or out of the body, will be cast into a furnace of material fire, but that they will be punished with a punishment of which fire is a suitable symbol.

What then is the meaning intended to be conveyed by the affirmation, "These shall go into eternal punishment" (*eis κόλασιν aiώνιον*) ? The following are the meanings which are given to the word *κόλασις* in Liddell and Scott's Lexicon. Its primary meaning is "a pruning," its secondary ones "a checking, a punishing, chastisement, correction, punishment ;" and of its corresponding verb, *κολάζω*, "to curtail, dock, prune ;" also "to keep within bounds, hold in check, bridle, check ;" hence "to chasten, correct, punish." Such are its ordinary meanings, its primary one being derived from the act of pruning trees, and its secondary ones denoting every thing included under the common term punishment. In the last clause it unquestionably means the same thing as "the eternal fire" of the first, into which those on the left hand of the Judge are sentenced to depart, and stands in direct contrast to the invitation to those on His right hand "to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world," *i.e.* the kingdom of Christ, which, although it is frequently designated in the Scripture "eternal," we yet learn from St. Paul, will not be without limits as to its duration.

It is contended by many, especially by those who hold the theory known by the name of universalism, that the word *κόλασις* means punishment with a view to correction. That

this is one of its meanings we have seen above ; but when the writers of the New Testament wish to express this idea, they use the word *παιδεία* to denote it. The word *κόλασις* is very rarely used by them, and with the addition of *αιώνιος* only this once. I think that the sense of the entire context forbids us to assign to it in this place the meaning of "correction." The words *αιώνιον κόλασιν*, therefore, must be understood as bearing the same sense, as that of their general assertions respecting the nature of the punishment which will be inflicted on the sinner who is finally impenitent.

But as I have already observed, inasmuch as the New Testament passed through more than fourteen centuries of transcription before it was committed to the safe custody of the printing-press, it is impossible to be certain that an isolated expression was the word actually employed by the sacred writer. It is true that all our existing Greek manuscripts read the word *κόλασιν*, punishment ; but it is a singular fact that the two most ancient, and several more modern manuscripts, of the Italic or ancient Latin version of the New Testament, which dates as early as the second century, and constituted the New Testament of the Churches which spoke Latin, in place of "punishment" read "fire," *ignis*. If we suppose that this version has preserved the true reading, the difficulty disappears ; because in that case the *πῦρ αἰώνιον* of the second clause is the same thing, as the *τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον* of the first ; and the word *πῦρ*, fire, bears the same meaning as it does in other parts of Scripture, when it is spoken of as the instrument of the destruction of the finally impenitent.

The references in the Acts of the Apostles to a state of retribution are extremely few, and of a very general character. This the reader will see from the following passages, which are the only ones in which even an apparent

reference is made to it. St. Peter thus remarks respecting Judas—

“To take the place in the ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, *that he might go to his own place.*” (Acts i. 25.)

Respecting him our Lord had made the awful declaration—

“Woe unto that man, through whom the Son of Man is betrayed. Good were it for that man if he had not been born.” (Matt. xxvi. 24.)

Further than this respecting the nature of his punishment, the Scriptures are silent.

“And it shall be, that every soul which shall not hearken to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed (*ἔξολοθρευθήσεται*) from among the people.” (Acts iii. 23.)

The Greek language does not possess a stronger word to denote utter destruction than the word here used.

St. Peter thus denounces the sin of Simon Magus in seeking to obtain the power of conferring the Holy Spirit in return for money :—

“Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” (Acts viii. 20—23.)

St. Paul and Barnabas thus address the blaspheming Jews :—

“It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (Acts xiii. 46.)

So also at Corinth, when the Jews blasphemed, St. Paul shook out his raiment and said unto them—

"Your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean ; from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles." (Acts xviii. 6.)

The historian gives us the following brief summary of St. Paul's address before Felix, one of the basest of men, concerning the faith in Christ Jesus.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time ; and when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me." (Acts xxiv. 25.)

Such are the only references, if some of them can be considered references, to this subject. It is evident that they throw no additional light on the point we are considering. The gospel of the apostolic preachers was a gospel of salvation, and only on very rare occasions did it contain denunciations of judgment ; and even these contain no hint that the judgment threatened was a never-ending existence in never-ending misery. At the same time their affirmations that man would be held responsible hereafter for his conduct here are distinct and plain.

My general conclusion, therefore, is, that in the Synoptic Gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles, the terms used to describe the future punishment of men irrecoverably wicked, unless some signification is assigned to them which they do not naturally bear, affirm that it will be some awful form of destruction ; and that in the final judgment pronounced on each individual, the great truth which was proclaimed by St. Paul at Athens will be fully realised :—

"The times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now he commandeth all men that they should everywhere repent, inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.)

Yes, by the man whom He hath ordained ; not another Jesus, but the veritable Jesus of the Gospels, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, as He is depicted there, the all-holy, and the all-compassionate Saviour, meek and lowly in heart ; the great self-sacrificer, who came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SAME SUBJECT AS IT IS SET FORTH IN THE GOSPEL AND THE EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

It will be necessary to consider this Gospel and Epistle together, because in these alone of the sacred writings we are in the presence of a terminology, portions of which are special, and technical, and such as was current in certain philosophical schools of thought at the time when they were composed. The Epistle also is a kind of commentary on the Gospel, and presupposes that those for whose instruction it was intended, even if they were not in actual possession of it, were familiar with its peculiar aspects of thought, either from the teaching of the Apostle himself or from some other source of information.

It is remarkable that in the writings of this Apostle there are only four passages which make a definite affirmation respecting a judgment to come, and one only which affirms that this judgment awaits man after the resurrection. On the other hand, the passages are numerous which affirm that which is designated *aiώνιος ζωή*, which in the Revised Version is uniformly translated “eternal life,” and in not a few places as a correction of the translation “everlasting life” of the Authorised Version, and which will be not merely a future but is a present possession of the believer.

But while there are only this inconsiderable number of direct references to future retribution in the writings of this Apostle, there are numerous indirect ones. These are set forth under the following contrasts :—

I. The contrast between *ζωή* (life) and *θάνατος* (death), the one being the antithesis of the other.

II. That between the Church, or kingdom of God, and the world ; the one being viewed as the region of holiness and life, and the other of sin, corruption, and death.

III. That between those who are born of God and those who are the children of the evil one.

I. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN *ζωή* (LIFE) AND *θάνατος* (DEATH).

It is a remarkable fact, to which the reader's attention should be drawn, that although the word *αιώνιος* (eternal, *i.e.* age-long) is frequently joined as an adjective to *ζωή* (life), it is never once so joined to its contrast, *θάνατος* (death). The term life, as applied to man, is almost invariably used in the discourses of the Gospel and in the Epistle to denote not life in its ordinary sense but that life in him which is spiritual and moral ; or, in other words, all the higher faculties of man when they are in active operation in the service of holiness.\* Death is used to denote the opposite of this, *viz.* that condition of man in which his higher affections are latent, and when in consequence of this he is a prey of the lower appetites and passions ; and, secondly, a condition in which everything in him which is capable of being perverted to evil is in a state of active opposition to holiness and to God.

The following are examples of the Apostle's use of the words *αιώνιος* *ζωή* and of the meaning which he attaches to them :

\* Life in its primary meaning denotes that principle which differentiates living from dead matter ; but what it is in itself, scientific research has failed, and probably ever will fail, to discover. From its phenomena we infer that it is a force which, as long as it energises in man, animals, and vegetables, is capable of counteracting the operation of the physical forces, and of producing a number of results which they are powerless to effect. From this, its primary meaning, it has passed off into a number of secondary ones, which will readily occur to the reader. In like manner we are entirely ignorant of what death is in itself. As we use the word in ordinary language, it simply means the cessation of the phenomena of life, or the opposite of that which we mean by life, whether we use that term in its primary or its various secondary meanings.

1. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath eternal *life* (*έχει ζωήν αἰώνιον*), and cometh not into judgment, but *hath passed out of death into life*. Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son to have life in himself ; and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this, for the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life ; and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John v. 24—29.)

This utterance is a very important one, and therefore I must set forth its definite affirmations in as many distinct propositions. It affirms—

1st. That eternal life is not merely that condition of existence to which the believer will be raised at the resurrection, but it is a thing of which he is even now in actual possession. Our Lord does not say that *he shall be raised to eternal life at some period of the future*, but that *he is already in possession of it*; not that *he shall pass from death unto life*, but that *he has already done so*. It follows, therefore, that the idea which in this passage is conveyed by the words "eternal life" is not that of mere duration, but that it is a condition of man's spiritual and moral being which will remain unaffected by the dissolution of the body.

2nd. That the "eternal life" here spoken of is the result of hearing Christ's words and believing on Him that sent Him, *i.e.* that it is a spiritual and moral change which will be effected in the mind of man by awakening in it a living faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

3rd. That the change involved is not a sudden creation, which imparts to the spirit of man qualities and powers of

which it was previously destitute, but a gradual one, viz. *a passing out of a state of death into one of life*; i.e. that he who hears Christ's words, and believes on Him that sent Him, thereby passes out of that condition in which his spiritual and moral powers and affections existed in a state of latency into one in which those powers and affections pass into a condition of active energy. I am aware that there are those who hold that man is brought into the world in a condition so depraved that nothing good exists in him even in a latent state; but this is a theory which contradicts both facts and Scripture. "Why," says our Lord, "do ye not of yourselves judge that which is right?"

4th. The last clause of this utterance is the only one in the writings of this Apostle which distinctly affirms that there will be a general resurrection both of the evil and of the good. "Marvel not at this," says our Lord, "for the hour cometh *in which all that are in the tombs* shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment."

This resurrection is carefully distinguished from the resurrection mentioned in the preceding clause, for after affirming that "eternal life" is a present possession of the believer, the Divine speaker adds—

"Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour cometh, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."

Our Lord, in these words, not only says that this hour was coming in the future, but that it was now actually come ("and now is"), when the dead—not those in the tombs—shall hear His voice, and that they that hear shall live. It is evident that in these words He is speaking of something different from bodily death. Of that He speaks when He affirms that all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice

and shall come forth. They will have no option but to hear and to obey. But those designated "the dead" at verse 25 are represented as having an option whether they will hear His voice to any practical purpose, for it is only those who hear that will live. The words are descriptive, therefore, of persons who hear Christ's words and believe on Him that sent Him, and who, therefore, possess eternal life as a present possession. It should also be observed that when our Lord speaks of those in the tombs who have done ill as coming forth to a resurrection of judgment, He leaves the judgment to which they will come forth undefined, both as to its nature and duration.

Again our Lord declares—

2. "This is the will of my Father, that every one that *beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him*, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 40.)

In this utterance "eternal life" in man is affirmed to be the result of beholding (*θεωρῶν*, contemplating) the Son and believing on Him. The first of these acts involves a steady contemplation on the part of the beholder of the Divine perfections which shine forth in the person of Jesus Christ; and the second, a cordial acquiescence in and acceptance of them as the supreme manifestation of holiness and goodness. Thus, to use an illustration, just as the natural sun kindles into active energy the life which lies latent in the seed, so the Sun of the spiritual world quickens into active energy those powers and affections which, until they feel His vivifying influence, lie latent, and are for practical purposes as good as dead in the soul of the beholder. "In him," says the Apostle in the preface to his Gospel, "was life, and the life was the light of men." Respecting the mode of operation by which these results are produced, whether in the natural or the spiritual and moral worlds, we are alike ignorant.

3. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood *hath* eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day ; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood *abideth* in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he that eateth me he shall live because of me." (John vi. 54—57.)

Several other utterances occur in this chapter presenting different aspects of the same thought.

I have no intention of entering into the controversy which has raged over the meaning of the words "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood," but I shall assume that they are a highly metaphorical expression, intended to denote that which is referred to in the preceding passage as the steady contemplation, the cordial acceptance, and the appropriation to itself, on the part of the spirit of man, of the person of Jesus Christ, the drawing of that spirit to Him by the power of His divine attractiveness, and of the character of God as revealed *in Him*. What, then, does our Lord affirm respecting this act of eating His flesh and drinking His blood ? The answer is not far to seek. He that does this will not only have eternal life as a possession in the future, but *he actually has it now* ; Christ will raise him up at the last day ; His flesh is spiritual meat and His blood spiritual drink ; he that *eats the one and drinks the other abides in Christ and Christ abides in him*, thus bringing Christ and the believer into the closest state of spiritual union ; and as I have said above, this *abiding in Christ, and through abiding in Christ abiding in the Father*, forms the surest pledge of the immortality of the sanctified and holy man. I make these observations because it has often been urged that if *aiôniôs* does not mean "everlasting" in the strict philosophical sense, the Christian has no promise of immortality. I answer, that the strongest possible promise of immortality is the affirmation of our Lord

that He and His Father abide in the holy man and the holy man in them.

4. "Even as thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him to them he should give 'eternal life ;' and this is 'life eternal,' that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ." (John xvii. 2, 3.)

This utterance of our Lord is an unequivocal affirmation that that which is here designated "eternal life" is a present possession of the believer, and that it consists in "knowing the only true God, and him whom he has sent, even Jesus Christ." What, then, does the word "know" mean in a context such as this? Evidently not a mere intellectual act, but one which is spiritual and moral. "Eternal life," then, in this utterance is not used to denote the mere duration of the life, but a condition of man's spiritual and moral being whereby he becomes united to God and God to him.

Equally strong is the testimony of the Epistle. The same idea runs throughout it. I shall, therefore, only quote a few of its most striking affirmations, asking the reader to observe that when the Apostle uses such expressions as knowing God and knowing Christ, abiding in God and abiding in Christ, and abiding in the light as God is in the light—expressions which are with him of frequent occurrence—his meaning is substantially the same as that of our Lord's great declaration that eternal life consists in the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus as the Christ whom He has sent.

The Epistle is introduced by a brief preface in which the Apostle describes its scope, and sets before his readers the source and fountain in which the eternal life of which he speaks resides, viz. the person of Jesus Christ, from whence it flows to man, and affirms that its historic manifestation in Him formed the subject of the apostolic testimony. He thus writes—

"That which was from the beginning ; that which we have

heard ; that which we have seen with our eyes ; that which we have beheld, and our hands have handled concerning the word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us) ; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that our joy may be fulfilled," *i.e.* filled up full. (1 John i. 1—4.)

The Apostle here affirms, with what seems to be almost needless reiteration, that the eternal life of which he was going to speak was no mere period of duration in the future, but that it had been manifested in an historic person with whom he had had the most intimate relations. "*The life was manifested,*" says he, "and we have seen it and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

The life here spoken of, therefore, is evidently one which is spiritual and moral, and consequently one above the conditions of time and space ; for it was a manifestation to man, in the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ, as they had been witnessed by the Apostle, of that eternal life which prior to such manifestation was with the Father. Precisely to the same effect he writes in the preface to the Gospel. "In him," *i.e.* in Jesus Christ, "was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in the darkness." These words render it certain that the Apostle here uses the term "life" exclusively in a moral and spiritual sense, for natural life is not the "light of men," nor does it "shine in the darkness." The "life," therefore, here spoken of is a vivifying principle, which radiates from Christ, and which is capable of calling into energetic action everything spiritual and moral which lies latent in the spirit of man.

In the following passages the Apostle speaks of "eternal life" not only as a possession now actually abiding in the believer, but he identifies it with love, which he shortly afterwards pronounces to be the essence of the character of God, and affirms that he that abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Thus he writes—

"For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning that we should love one another. . . *We know that we have passed out of death into life*, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother *abideth in death*. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer *hath eternal life abiding in him*." (1 John iii. 11, 14, 15.)

"No man hath beheld God at any time; if we love one another *God abideth in us*, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that *we abide in him, and he in us*, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, *God abideth in him, and he in God*. And we have known and have believed the love that God hath in us. *God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him*." (1 John iv. 12—16.)

In these passages the affirmation is express that the possession of the spirit of love is an all-sufficient proof that a man has not only passed out of the spiritual and moral condition designated death into one of life, but that having the spirit of love he now actually has eternal life abiding in him. The expression "eternal life," therefore, is used by the Apostle not for the purpose of denoting mere duration, but as denoting a state of mind which abides in the closest union with God, and God with it. This abiding of man in God, and God in man, thus forms the strongest pledge that man will still continue to exist in happiness after

the eternal ages have passed away; otherwise this union would be severed.

The same idea is conveyed in the following passage:—

“The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life: and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. These things have I written unto you that *ye may know that ye have eternal life*, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John v. 11—13.)

In this passage “life” and “eternal life” are evidently used to denote the same thing. According to the Apostle, “the having the Son” carries with it the actual possession of life in its spiritual sense; and in the concluding words of the above quotation he affirms that he wrote these things to the Church in order that they might know not merely that they would enter on eternal life at some period of the future, but that they had it now as a consequence of believing on the name of the Son of God. The reader should observe that the phrases “having the Son,” “believing on the Son,” “having life,” and “having eternal life,” and similar expressions, are used throughout this Epistle not as denoting the mere convictions of the understanding, but the innermost convictions of man’s moral and spiritual being.

It will be unnecessary to cite additional passages in proof of the position which I am seeking to establish, because the careful reader cannot fail to perceive that the same idea, expressed in different language, underlies by far the larger portion of the Epistle. Life with the Apostle is not used to denote mere existence, but life which is worth living, life in its highest sense, *i.e.* the active energy of the highest powers of man. I have used the words “spiritual and moral” in close conjunction, not only because I think that it is extremely difficult to draw a line which will clearly delineate the one from the other, but also because, when thus

united, they denote everything that exists in man higher than that nature which he shares in common with the animals.

Of the use of the word "death" in the Apostle's writings, or of some word which is equivalent to it in meaning, the following are examples:—

"He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John iii. 36.)

"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of God, and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves." (John vi. 53.)

"I said unto you that ye shall die in your sins, for except ye believe that I am he ye shall die in your sins." (John viii. 24.)

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." (John v. 25.) Here mark the distinction already referred to between the dead and those that are in the tombs.

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (John xv. 6.)

"We know that we have passed out of death into life. He that loveth not abideth in death." (1 John iii. 14, 15.)

"He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 12.)

"If a man see his brother sinning a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death." (1 John v. 16, 17.)

It is obvious that in nearly all these passages the thing denoted by the word "death" or its equivalents, is a condition of man in which his moral and spiritual affections are either latent, like the germ in the seed, until some vivifying

influence is exerted on it from without, or else one in which the entire man is in a state of active opposition to holiness. The three first of these, as well as several of the passages previously quoted, which describe life as directly connected with faith in and love to Jesus Christ, and death as the absence of both, require further consideration.

How then stands the case with the overwhelming majority of mankind, who have lived and died in the condition in which they were born and educated; and who have never heard of Jesus Christ, His gospel, or His Father as revealed in Him? The same question may with equal justice be asked with respect to those vast multitudes in nominally Christian countries, in which the gospel which has been proclaimed has failed to set forth Jesus Christ in the loveliness of his divinely attractive character, or the character of God, as a God who is loving, holy, just, and true. The former have never once had the opportunity of catching a glimpse of the rays of Him who is the Sun of the spiritual and moral world, and of receiving those vivifying influences which flow from the steady beholding and contemplation of Him. Can the latter be said to have rejected Him, when perhaps what they have rejected has been some miserable caricature of His divinely attractive person? For according to His own declaration, it is only to those who have been guilty of rejecting Him that the following utterance is applicable:—

“He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day. (John xii. 48.)

I need hardly say, in reply to these questions, that the utterances which we have been considering are entirely silent as to what will be the ultimate condition of that overwhelming majority of mankind who live and die in ignorance of Jesus Christ. It is certain that they cannot apply to those

who have either never heard of the gospel, or who have only had set before them an imperfect version of it. "How," says St. Paul, "can they believe without a preacher?" How can they love God who have never heard of his loveliness? What then will be their fate? One thing is certain. The righteous judge of all the earth will condemn no man for not having accepted a gospel of which he has either never heard, or of which he has only heard an imperfect version. Will then this overwhelming majority of mankind be simply annihilated? It is difficult to believe that they will be so in the face of the reiterated declarations both of the Gospel and the Epistle, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world; and of our Lord's declaration, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." But it is certain that an overwhelming majority of the human race have lived and died in a state of spiritual and moral degradation, and therefore that they have not possessed the life spoken of in the utterances which we have been considering. What then awaits them? I can only conceive of two alternatives as possible ones: either that they will be blotted out of existence, or that there will be a condition of things beyond the grave in which they will enter on a more favourable state of probation than has been vouchsafed to them here; for the wrath of God can only abide on those whose sinful condition is the result of their own voluntary act.

The last of the passages above cited demands a brief notice. It is the only Scripture in which sins are divided into two classes. "There is," says the Apostle, "*a sin unto death, and a sin not unto death;*" and he makes this remark with the full consciousness that all unrighteousness is sin.

The language here used evidently implies that the distinction between these two classes of sins was one which was well known to those to whom he was writing, otherwise it would have been absurd to give a direction that prayer should be

offered for those who were guilty of the one and withheld for those who were guilty of the other. The following passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews throw light on the nature of the sin which is here spoken of as a sin unto death :—

“ For, as touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” (Heb. vi. 4—7.)

Again :—

“ For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man who hath set at naught Moses’ law died without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God ; and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace ? ” (Heb. x. 26—29.)

In both of these passages the sin referred to is evidently the sin of wilful apostacy, after a man has received the fullest knowledge of Christ ; not simply a knowledge of the understanding, but one in which a man in some degree has had experience of its blessings. “ Such,” says the sacred writer, “ it is impossible to renew again to repentance.” How could it be possible, when the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ has been exhibited before them in vain ? On such apostates all the resources of Divine mercy and goodness have been exhausted, and there remains for them nothing but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the

adversaries. Observe what the sacred writer describes them as having done : " They have trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the spirit of grace." Surely this is the sin unto death, for which the Apostle was unwilling that those whom he addressed should make request, while for all other sins he directed them to pray. Yet, though a sin unto death, neither St. John nor the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives a hint, however awful the consequences of it may be, that the penalty attached to it was an endless existence in never-ending torment. The latter, on the contrary, distinctly affirms that the judgment and the fierceness of fire would *devour* the adversaries. How easy would it have been for him to have said that they would be consigned to torments which would never end, if that was in his opinion the penalty which would be incurred by sinners of this description.

In concluding this portion of our subject, I have only to observe that the overwhelming majority of mankind, who have lived and died either without having heard of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, or only of an imperfect version of it, do not come within the denunciations of either the Gospel or the Epistle. Such have certainly not been guilty of rejecting Christ or his sayings ; nor have they trodden under foot the Son of God, or put Him to an open shame. Whether there is reason for believing that a probation, under more favourable conditions than that which was vouchsafed them here, will be reserved for such, requires a separate chapter for its consideration.

## II.—THE CHURCH, OR KINGDOM OF GOD, AS OPPOSED TO THE WORLD, THE REGION OF DARKNESS AND OF SIN.

It is remarkable that while the kingdom of God is spoken of in the Gospel, yet neither it nor the Church is mentioned

by name in the Epistle ; but in it we have frequent references to that which is its equivalent. Thus the writer speaks of himself, and of those whom he is addressing, as members of a community in which the spirit of God abides. This community can be none other than the Church of the Pauline Epistles, and the kingdom of God of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

To enable us to form a correct idea of the meaning of these contrasts in the Apostle's writings, it will be necessary to transport ourselves in thought to the thirty years which elapsed between A.D. 60 and A.D. 90, and thus endeavour to realise the state of things which had recently filled the Apostle's vision. During this interval he had seen the evil spirit which underlay the Judaism of our Lord's day culminate in its final state of corruption ; and he had witnessed the terrible overthrow of the Jewish Church and nation. Shortly before, and also during, the last years of his life, the might of the Roman Empire had endeavoured to extinguish the Church in blood. Terrible, indeed, were the times in question. Religion had long since ceased to exert any influence for good in the pagan world, as far as it came under the Apostle's view. The only real religion which existed in the Roman empire was the worship of power in the person of the reigning Cæsar, who was too often a monster of iniquity. The worst forms of profligacy no longer hid themselves in secret, but flaunted themselves in the light of day. Moral corruption had so eaten into the vitals of pagan society as fully to justify the expression, "the whole world lieth in wickedness ;" and, as far as the then existing condition of society was concerned, it contained no power which was capable of arresting its downward course. On the other hand, scattered over this vast ocean of sin and corruption, the Apostle's eye caught sight of a few small Christian communities, standing out as islands of light in marked contrast to the darkness of the world by

which they were surrounded, and the professed end of whose existence was the promotion of holiness both in themselves and in the evil world in which they dwelt.

What, then, is the idea which the Apostolic writer intended to convey by the term "the world"? In a few instances it is used by him to denote the world in which we live; also, in a few more, its inhabitants, *i.e.* the whole human race. Of these uses the prologue to the Gospel furnishes the following example: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not;" in the first two cases the word "world" being used to denote the world in which we live, and in the third its inhabitants. But in the great majority of instances in which it occurs it is used in a moral sense, to denote the entire condition of thought, feeling, and morality, which came under the Apostle's view outside the Church of God. In this, its moral sense, it has a twofold reference. In the Gospel it usually denotes the principles and the spirit of Judaism, as they exhibited themselves in opposition to the person, work, and teaching of our Lord; in the Epistle, the entire tone of thought of the heathen world, as far as it came under the Apostle's observation. As the Church, in the great principles which animate it, is viewed as the region of holiness and the abiding place of the spirit of God, so the world outside it is spoken of as the region of spiritual and moral corruption, and as under the dominion of the evil one. But it is certain, from the Pauline Epistles, that unworthy members were to be found in all the Apostolic Churches, though they are only referred to in this Epistle under the designation of antichrists, who had separated themselves from the communion of the Church. It follows, therefore, that the communities whom the Apostle was addressing were contemplated by him in their ideal and not in their actual character; as what their members ought to be in virtue of their Christian profession, rather

than as what they were in individual cases. But as the world throughout the Epistle is the antithesis of the Church, it is used in the same ideal sense as the abode of all moral evil and corruption, *i.e.* as the principles and the spiritual and moral atmosphere of the one tended only to holiness, so those of the other tended only to sin. The Church, then, as contemplated by the Apostle, is the region of light, holiness, and the abiding-place of the Spirit of God; the world, that of darkness, spiritual and moral corruption, and in its animating principles tending only to evil.

It is necessary that the reader's attention should be drawn to these important facts, otherwise he will be in danger of mistaking the Apostle's meaning.

Speaking generally, it was far from his intention to affirm, in those passages where he speaks of the world in contrast to those Christian communities for whose use the Epistle was intended, that all their members realised the true ideal of the Church, and that all those whom he designated "the world," realised the ideal of the spiritual and moral corruption which he denounces under that expression.

One further remark is necessary. What might be said, and said truly, of the world of the Apostle's day is not directly applicable to that in which we live—a world which the Church of Jesus Christ has been leavening with the principles of Christianity during more than eighteen centuries of time. It is only true of it as far as its moral and spiritual atmosphere continue to be leavened with the principles of legalism and paganism. It is true that the leavening of humanity with the principles of Christianity is described by our Lord Himself in several of His parables as a slow and gradual process; but surely between the world of the Apostle's day and that which we designate the modern world a great gulf lies, the vastness of which can only be fully estimated by those who have a considerable acquaintance

with the literature of the Apostolic age and of the century which preceded it. With the Christian Church and all its agencies for good existing in the midst of it, it cannot now be said that the whole world lies in the evil one, though when the Apostle contemplated the little Christian communities of his day, scarcely visible in the midst of the great pagan world, he might full well use such an expression to designate that mass of spiritual and moral evil by which he was surrounded. I have made this observation because the ordinary reader is apt to interpret the language which the Apostle uses respecting the world in the midst of which he lived, as though it were applicable without qualification to the modern world.

Yet the world, though thus characterised as the seat of evil and corruption, is affirmed in the following passages to be the subject of redemption.

“Behold,” says the Baptist, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John i. 29.)

“God so loved the world,” says our Lord, “that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him.” (John iii. 16, 17.)

“The bread that I give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” (John vi. 51.)

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.” (John xii. 32.)

“I came, not to judge the world, but to save the world.” (John xii. 47.)

“He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 John ii. 2.)

“To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John iii. 8.)

These passages unquestionably affirm that God loves the world, that Jesus Christ takes away the sin of the world,

that He came to save the world, that He gave His life for the life of the world, that He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and that He came to destroy the works of the devil. Yet it is an unquestionable fact that an overwhelming majority of those who constituted the world of the Apostle lived and died in a state of spiritual and moral degradation, and that such constitute an overwhelming majority of the human race. Has the work of Jesus Christ, then, proved a failure? Has He given His life for the life of the world in vain? Will spiritual and moral evil continue to exist for ever? Will rebellious wills be capable of resisting for ever the power of His divine attractiveness? Will He not succeed in destroying the works of the devil, but after all that He has done and suffered, will He leave those countless multitudes, in numbers numberless, who will constitute the overwhelming majority of mankind, to exist for ever in a state of rebellion against God, and in a state of misery which, through the endless succession of the æons of the future, will never know even the hope of a termination? To these questions, ignorant though we are as to the mode in which God will solve them, I think that everyone who dwells in love, thereby dwelling in God and God in him, must answer, God forbid! The saints of the olden dispensation lived and died without any express revelation assuring them of a happy existence beyond the grave. They had frequent occasions to say, as far as their experience of life was concerned, Many are the reasons why we should be cast down, and why we should be disquieted within us. Yet they hoped in God. Less trying, however, is our position respecting those countless multitudes who have lived and died without having had set before them the message of God's redeeming love. True it is that we have no express revelation (unless it be in two passages of the sacred writings) which discloses the secrets of the unseen world; but we have the assurance that the end

and purpose of the mission of Jesus Christ was to save the world, and that God loves the world ; and also we possess the revelation of the Divine character and perfections shining forth in Jesus Christ—a revelation so clear that, according to His own affirmation, he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father ; and we have the affirmation of the Apostle, that a time is coming when all things shall be subdued to Jesus Christ and when God shall be all in all.

### III.—THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE BORN OF GOD, AND THOSE THAT ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE EVIL ONE.

Several of the points which fall under this division of our subject I have already considered under the two preceding heads. I shall therefore only draw attention to those which are peculiar to it.

A widespread system of popular theology divides mankind into two classes, the regenerate and the unregenerate, *i.e.* those who have been the subjects of a new spiritual birth and those who have not experienced the change in question, the former of whom will inherit the kingdom of God, while the latter will be excluded from it, and, according to widespread systems of popular theology, consigned to a misery which will never end. This change is designated regeneration,\* or the second birth,

\* It is a singular fact that the word “regeneration,” which is in such general use in popular controversies, is of very rare occurrence in the New Testament. It is used only in the following instances. In reply to Peter’s question, “Lo, we have left all, and followed thee ; what then shall we have?” our Lord replies, “Verily, I say unto you, that ye that have followed me, in the regeneration (*ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ*), when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Here it is obvious that the word is not used as the designation of a subjective condition of the human mind, but of the kingdom of Christ in its glorious manifestation. We next meet with it in the Epistle to Titus : “But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love towards man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration (*διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας*, margin,

which, as I have observed above, in the case of adults, is not easy to distinguish from what is popularly called conversion. Innumerable have been the discussions and the theories as to what the change consists in which is designated regeneration both in systematic and popular theology. I think, however, that all that is essential in them may be expressed under the three following heads:—

1. That regeneration is a change wrought in the human soul by a new creative act of the Spirit of God, whereby, having been born spiritually dead, it is made spiritually alive; some holding that this change is effected at baptism, and others before or after it. This change is what is called in scientific language “a subjective change.”

2. That it is a change in outward condition, which takes place in baptism, whereby, to use the words of the Church Catechism, the baptised person is made “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” This may be designated an objective change.

3. That it is a change both subjective and objective; or, in the words of the Catechism of the Church of England, it consists of two parts, an outward and an inward, the latter being described as a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and children of wrath, we are thereby made the children of grace. The reader will observe that this definition is vague,

*laver* of regeneration) and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” (Titus iii. 4—6.) Here the words “washing, or laver of regeneration,” can only mean baptism, in which the baptised made an open profession of their acceptance of Christ as King of the kingdom of God. St. Peter uses a somewhat different word to denote the great change which, as a consequence of their acceptance of Christianity, had passed over those Jewish Christians to whom he wrote, “Seeing you have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth, see that ye love one another from the heart fervently, *having been begotten again* (*ἀναγεννημένοι*), not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Peter i. 22, 24.) These form the only examples of the use of this word in the New Testament.

and enables no small variety of opinion to be included under it.

These theories are supposed to be propounded in the third chapter of this Gospel, in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus; and the particular interpretation of it which they involve to be supported by certain passages in the Epistle which we have been considering. The portions of the discourse which bear on this subject are as follows:—

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born anew (*γεννηθή ἀνωθεν*) he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew (*ἀνωθεν*). The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John iii. 3—9.)

What advantage the Revisers supposed would result from substituting the word “anew” for “again” of the Authorised Version it is difficult to imagine. Equally difficult is it to conceive what could have induced them to place the words “born anew” in the text, and “born from above” in the margin; for that the natural meaning of the Greek word *ἀνω* is “above,” and its compound, *ἀνωθεν*, “from above,” is unquestionable. The Evangelist himself uses the word *ἀνωθεν* in the signification of “from above” in the immediate context in the following passage: “He that cometh from above (*ἀνωθεν*) is above all.” Here the word is properly translated in both versions “from above;” but the Revisers, in violation of their own rule, to translate, as far as possible, the same

Greek word by the same English word, have rendered it in John iii. 3 and 7 “anew,” and in verse 31, “from above.” Nor is this a solitary use of the word in the Evangelist; for addressing the Jews our Lord says, “Ye are from beneath (*ἐκ τῶν κάτω*), I am from above (*ἐκ τῶν ἀνων*).” So again in our Lord’s address to Pilate: “Thou wouldest have no power against me except it were given thee from above” (*ἀνωθεν*). In a secondary sense this word may be used to denote, from the commencement of a thing. Thus St. Luke uses it in the preface to his Gospel, when he speaks of the care which he had taken to investigate the truth of everything which he reports from the commencement of our Lord’s ministry. Here he uses the word *ἀνωθεν*, meaning “from the first.” In fact this word can only be made to signify “again” by representing a person as going upwards to the commencement of a thing, and then doing it over a second time; but to justify us in assigning this meaning to it, there ought to be something in the context which shows that the speaker or writer intended to use it in this very unusual sense. But in the utterance, “Except a man be born *ἀνωθεν* he cannot see the kingdom of God,” there is nothing even to hint that the word is used otherwise than in its natural sense, “from above”—a sense which the author must have assigned to it, for in his epistle he uses as its equivalent the words “born of God.”

It has been urged that the word *ἀνωθεν* must be translated “again” or “anew” in this passage, because the question of Nicodemus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” implies that he understood our Lord as affirming the necessity of a man’s experiencing a second birth as a necessary qualification for entering into the kingdom of God. I think that there is no necessity to attribute to a man who bore the title of “the teacher of Israel,” who was at least a secret

follower of our Lord, and who in the end openly confessed him, such extreme stupidity as is implied in the question, “ How can a man be born when he is old ? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born ? ” if it was intended for anything else than a strong metaphor, to denote what the speaker thought was a matter of extreme difficulty, viz. that a full-grown man could change his formed habits and character. Not only is the language of strong metaphor very common in the sacred writings ; but it is not infrequent even in our Lord’s teaching. Of this the following passages are examples :—

“ It is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God ; ” words which our Lord subsequently explained to his astonished disciples to be a strong metaphor, intended to enforce the important truth, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into it.

So again in enforcing the duty of faith in God he employs an equally strong utterance which it is impossible to understand otherwise than as a striking metaphor :—

“ Verily, I say unto you, whoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it.” (Mark xi. 23.)

Instead of being a blessing, it would be a great curse if we had only to ask of God and obtain whatever we asked for. The language therefore is a strong metaphor, intended to enforce the duty of prayer.

Nicodemus doubtless had often read the following passage in the Prophet Jeremiah :—

“ Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots ? then can ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jer. xiii. 23.)

Surely the prophet did not mean, nor Nicodemus understand

him as meaning, that it was as impossible for a man of formed habits to turn from evil to good as for an Ethiopian to change his skin and the leopard his spots, but only that the language employed was a metaphor to express a thing which was extremely difficult. Nicodemus's question therefore may full well be understood as expressing his sense of the extreme difficulty of effecting that change of mind and character which our Lord affirmed to be necessary for worthy membership in the Messianic kingdom. It should be observed that our Lord's reply makes no reference to Nicodemus's supposed difficulty respecting the impossibility of a second birth, but merely repeats the truth involved in his previous utterance in a somewhat altered form :—

“ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John iii. 5.)

In this utterance it is impossible to understand the word “born,” as applied to being *born of water*, other than in a metaphorical sense. Why, then, is it to be understood in a different sense, *i.e.* as denoting an actual second birth, in the words which immediately follow ?

What, then, is the kingdom of God here referred to ? To this question no doubt many will answer, “heaven.” But surely the kingdom of God in this passage can be none other than that kingdom of which the Synoptic Gospels inform us that our Lord went about proclaiming that it was about shortly to be set up ; the speedy advent of which was then a matter of general expectation ; which he commanded the twelve and the seventy when He sent them on their respective missions to announce as being at hand ; and of which He Himself declared before Pilate that he claimed to be the King. What, then, was that kingdom ? Is it possible when our Lord announced it to be at hand, that its advent was yet distant long centuries in the future ? The Acts of the Apostles renders

it certain that it is none other than the Church of the present dispensation. This is also proved by our Lord's second utterance, which is intended to be explanatory of the meaning of his first : " Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Many attempts have been made to put some most unnatural meaning on the words "born of water" by those who have a particular theory to maintain respecting that which constitutes regeneration ; but it is incredible, unless words are meaningless, that it can refer to anything else than the well-known rite of baptism, with which Nicodemus, as a Pharisee, was familiar ; a rite which the Baptist affirmed that he was divinely authorised to administer even to Jews ; which was administered by our Lord's disciples, under his own immediate sanction and authority ; which was subsequently ordained by himself as a condition of membership in his kingdom ; and which was required by the Apostles as a condition of such membership, even of those who had previously received the gifts of the Divine Spirit. To this he adds a further condition which is spiritual and moral ; that to constitute a man an acceptable member of His kingdom he must be likewise born of the Spirit.

To understand the meaning of this utterance it is necessary to keep in mind that it is addressed to a Pharisaic Jew for the purpose of correcting the erroneous ideas which were then current respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, the advent of which was the subject of eager popular expectation. What, then, were the ideas which such entertained respecting the conditions of membership in it ? Natural descent from Abraham or incorporation into his family by the rite of circumcision, and obedience to the whole law, moral, ceremonial, and ritual, as interpreted by the Pharisaic School, being a mass of ritual observances encompassing a man's entire life, a burden which St. Peter designates " a yoke which neither our

fathers nor we were able to bear." In opposition to such views our Lord affirms that neither of these would convey a right to membership in this kingdom, but on the contrary the right to enjoy its benefits would depend on a state of the heart and character, followed by the open acknowledgement of Himself as its King by the act of baptism in His name. That the conditions of acceptable membership in the kingdom of God which was about to be set up would be wholly different from the popular conceptions of them, had been previously announced, in the following words, by the Baptist in his address to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came to his baptism.

"Ye offspring of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of repentance, and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matt. iii. 7—9.)

In like manner St. Peter, after proclaiming Jesus to be Lord and Christ—*i.e.* the King of the kingdom of God which was then being actually set up, and into which he exhorted the multitudes who were affected by his preaching to enter—in answer to their inquiry, what it behoved them to do, thus answers: "Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Such, then, was the meaning which the Apostles put upon our Lord's declaration, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and of their own apostolical commission, "Go ye, therefore, and make *disciples* of all nations, *baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

The expressions "born of God," "children of God," and others of similar import, are of frequent occurrence in the

Apostle's writings, and are uniformly used to denote Christians who are living up to their Christian calling. Thus he writes :—

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God, and such we are. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not made manifest what we shall be.” (1 John iii. 1, 2.)

Again—“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is begotten of God, and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also who is begotten of him. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For whosoever is begotten of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (1 John v. 1—4.)

Again—“We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not.” (1 John v. 18.)

Also—“Whosoever is begotten of God doeth not sin, for his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.” (1 John iii. 9.)

In all these passages it is evident that the Apostle uses the terms “born” and “begotten of God” as synonymous with Christians who live up to the height of their Christian calling; and they are exclusively applied by him to members of the Church, and presuppose an actual acquaintance with the person and work of Jesus Christ. The expressions “born from above” and born of “water and the Spirit” convey substantially the same meaning.

Let us now consider who those are who, in contrast to the above, are designated “children of the devil.” The following are the passages in which this term occurs :—

“Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” (John viii. 23.)

Still more emphatic in the same chapter—

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your

father *it is your will to do* (*θελετε ποιεῖν*). He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." (John viii. 44.)

Let it be observed that these two utterances are addressed to our Lord's bitterest opponents, and are therefore applicable to such only. On one point the second utterance is emphatic: "The lust of your father *it is your will to do*."<sup>\*</sup> Those, therefore, whom our Lord was addressing proved that they were his genuine children by their resemblance to him in character, shown by their attempts to murder Jesus. Sonship of the devil, therefore, consists in the deliberate will and purpose to do the devil's deeds; *i.e.* men thus described have fallen into a state of wilful and conscious opposition to holiness and to God, which is described throughout the New Testament as the leading trait of the devil's character.

The Epistle presents us with the following contrasts between the children of God and the children of the devil:—

"My little children," says the Apostle, "let no man lead you astray. He that doeth righteousness" (*ο ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην*) "is righteous, even as he is righteous; he that doeth sin" (*ο ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν*) "is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is begotten of God doeth not sin" (*ἀμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ*), "because his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness" (*μη ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην*) "is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (1 John iii. 7—10.)

\* The words *θελετε ποιεῖν* convey a very different meaning from the rendering in the Authorised Version, "ye will do." The strict translation is, "ye will to do," which means a direct and wilful persisting in sin, or a condition in which all good has ceased to exist, and the entire man has hopelessly surrendered himself of his own free choice to the practice of evil.

Again—"We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not" (*οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει*), "but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not." (1 John v. 18.)

It should be observed that the words "doeth righteousness" and "doeth sin" are but weak renderings of the Greek *ο ποιῶν τὴν ἐκαίοσύνην*, and *ο ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν*, which denote one who by a deliberate act works or practises the one or the other. Also, as the Apostle beyond all question recognised the truth of the saying, "There is not a just man upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not," he must have intended to convey by the words *οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει*, "sinneth not," in the last quotation, the same idea which he expressed in the first by *ο ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν*, viz. one who sins habitually and with a will to sin, and not one who falls into sin by the force of temptation or of circumstances over which he can exert no control.

It is evident, therefore, that by the terms "children of God" and "children of the devil" the Apostle did not intend to divide mankind into two great divisions which should be exhaustive of the family of man, or to affirm that there was nothing intermediate between these two extremes of character. If this had been his purpose, inasmuch as in his writings sonship to God presupposes a knowledge of, a personal union with, a love to, and an abiding in God and Christ, it would follow that not only the overwhelming majority of the human race who have never heard of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, but even those who in the darkness of the pagan world have been earnest seekers after truth, must be ranked among the children of the devil. But such an idea is not only dreadful in itself, but it contradicts the Divine attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and love, the revelation of God made in Jesus Christ, and the express assertions of St. Paul which I have already quoted as to the

principles on which God will judge those who have never had the benefit of a divine revelation.

The fact is that the case of those who have never heard of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or have only had some imperfect version of it, of those in whom all good is not become utterly extinct (for, as we have seen, such only are designated the children of the devil) is not once referred to in the Gospel or the Epistle. Consequently both are silent respecting the ultimate condition of such, except so far as it can be inferred from such utterances as "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," and "we have seen and bear record that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." The denunciations both of the Gospel and the Epistle are directed only against evil men before whom Jesus Christ has been set forth in all the power of His divine attractiveness, and who, having had Him thus held up before them have, with full knowledge, wilfully and deliberately rejected Him.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DOCTRINE OF RETRIBUTION AS SET FORTH IN THE REMAINING WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE will consider first the Epistles of St. Paul.

Although these abound with the strongest assurances that glorious prospects await believers in the world beyond the grave, and although the Apostle lays down clearly the great principle that God will judge the world in righteousness, yet they afford little information additional to that which we have derived from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles respecting the nature of the retribution which awaits those who finally reject the Gospel, or respecting the condition of those after death who have lived and died without having had the opportunity of accepting or rejecting that message of good news to man, which our Lord again and again affirmed that it was the end and purpose of His mission to proclaim. Several of the Apostle's most important affirmations respecting the hopes and prospects of believers we have had occasion to consider in the preceding chapters. It will, therefore, be unnecessary to discuss them here. All that remains for me to do in this place will be to set before the reader his general positions respecting future retribution.

The Apostle's writings naturally divide themselves into four divisions, the composition of which was separated from one another by a considerable interval of time.

1st. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians, written about A.D. 53, 54.

2nd. The two to the Corinthians, and those to the Galatians and Romans, written A.D. 57, 58.

3rd. Those to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon, composed about A.D. 62.

4th. The three pastoral Epistles, of uncertain date, except the Second Epistle to Timothy, which was written shortly before the Apostle's death.

It will be observed that the first three groups are separated from each other by an interval of about four years. I propose to consider them in the order of their composition, because there is a considerable difference of view between the earlier and the later ones.

#### I. THE TWO EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

The idea which pervades these two Epistles is the Parousia of Christ, commonly called His second advent. It is mentioned in no less than seven out of the eight chapters into which these Epistles are divided. I think that it is impossible to peruse them without arriving at the conclusion that both the Apostle and those to whom he wrote were persuaded that it was an event which would take place after no long interval of time. From the Second Epistle we learn that the members of this Church considered it to be an event then actually imminent; and that some of them were so firmly persuaded of its near approach that, in expectation of it, they neglected their ordinary business. One of the purposes for which the Apostle wrote his Second Epistle was to correct this idea. Thus he writes—

“ We beseech you, brethren, touching the coming (the Parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, *that the day of Christ is now present*” (*ενέστηκεν*). (2 Thess. ii. 1, 2.)

Having thus warned his readers, he then reminds them that he had had much to say on this subject when he was among them, and especially that our Lord's Parousia would not come to pass until an event which he calls "the apostacy" had taken place, and a personage whom he designates "the man of sin, the son of perdition," had been revealed, "whom the Lord Jesus would slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming" ( $\tauῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ$ ). (2 Thess. ii. 8.)

The entire passage is evidently written in enigmatical language, under the apprehension that if he spoke in plain terms it might compromise the Church with the public authorities, for even during his residence at Thessalonica the very dangerous charge had been preferred against him of "setting up another king, one Jesus." But he evidently calculated that those who had heard his oral teaching on this subject would understand his meaning. The reader is doubtless aware that an interminable controversy has arisen as to what the Apostle meant by "the apostacy," and what was the idea which he intended to convey under the figure of "the man of sin, the son of perdition," who was to appear prior to the Parousia of Christ. Into this controversy I shall not enter. I shall only assume that although this passage proves that St. Paul did not think that our Lord's coming was *close at hand*, yet it seems impossible to read these Epistles and the other writings of the New Testament without arriving at the conclusion that the entire Apostolic Church considered it to be an event not very remote, and never thought that eighteen centuries, perhaps a far longer period, would elapse before this glorious manifestation of Christ would take place. In his later Epistles the Parousia of Christ occupies a far less prominent place, and in the one last written, while he is still looking forward to it as the consummation of his highest aspirations, he is expecting not it, but death.

In reading the New Testament it is necessary that the fact should be kept steadily in mind, that not only the Apostolic Church, but the Apostles themselves, were in error when they thought that the coming of Christ in visible glory was an event which would take place at no distant period of time, perhaps in the lifetime of some of the existing generation. Our Lord had affirmed that "it was not given to them *to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath set within his own authority.*" They, therefore, continued ignorant that the glorious manifestation of the kingdom of God was an event which would not happen until some period of the far-distant future.

Such being the prominent position which the Parousia, or coming of Christ, occupies in these Epistles, it is hardly necessary to observe that future retribution is only referred to by the Apostle in direct connection with it. Of these references the following are examples:—

1. "For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as the rest that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, and are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in nowise precede those that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive and are left shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. iv. 13—18.)

From this passage we learn that the Thessalonian Christians were greatly disturbed respecting the lot of those among them who died prior to our Lord's manifestation in glory.

The Apostle therefore assures them that those who had fallen asleep prior to this event would be in no worse position than those who were alive to witness it, and that he had Divine authority for saying that departed saints will be raised from the dead before those who are living at the time of his appearing would be summoned to meet him. It should be observed that the resurrection of which the Apostle here speaks is exclusively a resurrection of believers.

2. In the following verses the Apostle speaks of the fate of those sinners who are alive at our Lord's coming:—

“ But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh, as a thief in the night. For when they are saying, Peace, and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail on a woman with child ; and they shall in no wise escape.” (1 Thess. v. 1—3.)

The judgment with which these sinners are here threatened is a sudden destruction (*aīphn̄dios ὅλεθρος*.) It is difficult to conceive that the word *ὅλεθρος*, the Greek equivalent of our English word destruction, when united with the word *sudden*, could have been understood by the Thessalonian Greek-speaking Christians as meaning a continuous existence in never-ending misery.

3. Similar is the affirmation made in the following passage:—

“ If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction (*aīώνιον ὅλεθρον*) from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his might,

when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believe (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day." (2 Thess. i. 6—10.)

Who are the persons here described as suffering punishment at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ? I will answer in the words of the Apostle: "*Them that afflict you, them who, at the time of His appearing, know not God, and that obey not the gospel.*" I say "at the time of His appearing," because there is no reference made in this passage, nor even in either of the Epistles, to a resurrection of any who are not saints. Consequently, the persons referred to are wicked men who are living at the time of our Lord's second coming.

What, then, is the punishment threatened? I answer in the Apostle's own words: "It will be a righteous thing with God to render affliction to them that afflict you; and to you that are afflicted, rest." Also, when our Lord shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believe, "those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will suffer punishment, even eternal destruction (*aiώνιον ὀλεθρόν*) from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his might."

I have been careful to use the Apostle's words, because this is one of the passages of the New Testament which are most relied on to prove the endlessness of the punishment of the wicked. I have already drawn attention to the fact, that the word *aiών* and its compounds do not suggest the philosophical idea of endlessness, but of indefinite yet limited periods of time, varying from "the present evil age" to "ages of ages." Still more important is it to observe that the Apostle is not here speaking of those who have died prior to the advent, without having embraced the gospel, but of certain persons who were then actually living and persecuting. Respecting these he has more to say in the context which immediately follows. In it he tells the Thessalonians that

an event, of which he had warned them when he was present, which he designates "the apostacy," and the manifestation of a power which he designates "the man of sin, the son of perdition," would take place prior to the advent. Now, without attempting to define what was the precise idea which the Apostle intended to convey by these words, it is evident that he intended those to whom he wrote to understand by them some persecuting world-power, which would set itself in opposition to Christ and his gospel, respecting which he thus writes:—

"And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming." (2 Thess. ii. 8.)

What, then, is the natural meaning of these words? As "the lawless one" is evidently intended to denote some anti-christian world-power, the words "slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming," must mean that this world-power would be utterly annihilated by our Lord at His Parousia; and therefore they affirm nothing respecting the nature of that retribution which awaits sinners in the unseen world. Further, as these passages stand in the closest juxtaposition, we can scarcely err in assuming that the same persecuting world-power is spoken of in each. In the second chapter he affirms that "the Lord would slay," or, as some copies read, "consume it, by the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming," to which the corresponding words in the immediate context in the first chapter are, "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his might."

What, then, is the meaning of the words “eternal destruction” (*aiώνιον ὀλεθρόν*)? Certainly it would be difficult to find a word in the Greek language less fitted to suggest the idea of endless existence in torment than *ολεθρός*, or in English than the word “destruction;” for destruction can by no possibility be made to mean endless duration; no, not even with the addition of the word “age-long;” for even if the word *aiώνιος* could be understood as meaning “never-ending,” then *aiώνιος ὀλεθρός* must mean “a destruction which never will be completed,” a meaning which is self-contradictory. Doubtless the word “eternal” (*aiώνιος*) added to destruction, was intended to impart to it an intensity of meaning. What, then, is that meaning? I answer, a destruction which would be utter and complete, and from which there would be no revival during the ages of the future.

## II.—THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS, GALATIANS, AND ROMANS.

In the two Epistles to the Corinthians the references to the future retribution of the wicked are few. The following are the most important:—

1. “The word of the cross is to them that are perishing, foolishness, but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. i. 18.)

The Revisers have correctly translated the words *τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις*, and *τοῖς σωζομένοις*, rendered in the Authorised Version, “them that perish, and them that are saved,” by the words “them that are perishing, and them that are being saved,” the Greek denoting, in each instance, not a completed but an uncompleted act. The Apostle, therefore, is not speaking of a state of things beyond the grave, but of one which was then existing inside and outside the Church, and describing its twofold tendency, which, when completed, would be destruction or salvation. It was, in

fact, a process, *i.e.* a work which was being continually carried on.

2. "Wherefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall each man have his praise from God." (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

Here the Apostle simply affirms that the judgment which God will execute hereafter, whether on the righteous or the wicked, will be a righteous judgment; and that, knowing the inmost secrets of the heart, He will frequently reverse the judgments which men form of one another.

3. "Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye were washed; but ye were sanctified; but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 9—11.)

In these words the Apostle affirms that such characters will have no share in the kingdom of God in its future glorious manifestation; but he is silent as to the nature or the duration of the retribution which awaits them in the unseen world.

4. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment (*κρίμα*) unto himself if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. For if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we be not condemned with the world." (1 Cor. xi. 27—32.)

This passage is an important one, because the Authorised Version has taught its readers that those who eat of the bread and drink of the cup of the holy communion unworthily eat and drink unto themselves *damnation*.

This the Revisers have properly altered into "judgment," for the word *κρίμα* bears no such meaning as that which in current theology is attached to the word "damnation." The profanation which is described in the context was one of the most extreme character, in some cases nothing short of getting drunk at the love-feast which preceded the celebration of this sacred rite, the perpetual memorial of Christ's giving Himself for the life of the world; but what was the judgment which the Apostle tells us fell on those who were guilty of it? Not damnation but sickness, and in not a few cases death. These he affirms to have been inflicted, not for the purpose of vengeance but of chastisement, in order that those who were guilty of the sin in question might not be condemned with the world. To those who affirm that probation is confined to this life, it may seem strange that the Apostle should speak of death, which he terms sleep, as a chastisement.

5. "For we are a sweet savour of Christ unto God in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing: to the one we are a savour from death unto death; to the other a savour from life unto life." (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.)

To this passage the same observations are applicable as to number one.

6. "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." (2 Cor. v. 10, 11.)

The Apostle here affirms that God will call men to account hereafter for their conduct here; that He will reward and punish them according to their actions; and that the judg-

ment which He will execute will be a discriminating judgment, not a judgment according to outward appearances, but according to inward realities. "We must," says he, "all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." We further learn from this passage that when he warned men of the consequences with which wilful sin will be attended in the unseen world, the topic which he urged on their consideration was "the fear of the Lord," by which he endeavoured to "persuade men" to turn from their evil ways, *i.e.* he urged upon them the consideration of a judgment to come, in which a righteous God would render to evil men a retribution exactly proportioned to their evil deeds; but his words contain no hint that he was in the habit of warning sinners—vast numbers of those whom he addressed must have been ignorant of a fact so awful—that their doom would be a never-ending existence in never-ending torment.

#### THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

Except where the Apostle speaks of the curse of the law, from which Christ redeemed those under it by undergoing that curse, this Epistle contains only two references to a state of retribution. The first is a simple warning that those who practise the works of the flesh which he enumerates shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The second is contained in the following words:—

"Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (*φθοράν*), but he that soweth unto the spirit shall of the spirit reap eternal life" (*ζωὴν αἰώνιον*). (Gal. vi. 7, 8.)

God, says the Apostle, is not mocked, for a man shall reap precisely what he sows. What, then, is sowing to the flesh? The giving the rein to man's animal passions until they become dominant in him. What is sowing unto the spirit?

The cultivation of all those affections which tend to holiness until they become dominant over the entire man. The reaping of the one will be *φθορά*, corruption; the reaping of the other will be *αιώνιος ζωή*, eternal life.

The word *φθορά* in ordinary Greek means corruption, decay, and destruction. Surely if the Apostle had intended to warn those to whom he was writing, that the conduct which he denounces would incur the penalty of a conscious existence in torments which would never end, he would not have expressed a truth so awful by such a word as *φθορά*, corruption, which in its ordinary acceptation conveys no hint of such a meaning, but in terms which were clear and unmistakable. Further, the reader should observe that while the Apostle has added the adjective *αιώνιος*, eternal, to the "life" which those who sow to the Spirit shall reap, he has abstained from adding any word expressing duration to the *φθορά* which shall be reaped by those who sow to the flesh. To say the least of it, the omission is remarkable.

#### THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

The following are its most remarkable utterances respecting future retribution:—

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth [margin, who hold the truth] in unrighteousness." (Rom. i. 18.)

The Apostle here affirms that even in the Gospel God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and that it will be directed against those who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. But as it is impossible to do this without knowing what "the truth" is, his denunciation is only applicable to those who have had the means of knowing it. Further, although the Apostle's declaration that God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness

of men implies that wilful sin will be attended with terrible suffering, he does not utter a word which affirms, or even implies, that God's holy and righteous indignation against it can be satisfied only by the endless suffering of the sinner.

In the next chapter he lays down the general principles on which God will execute judgment in the following words:—

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in welldoing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life; but to them that are factious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory, and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God.” (Rom. ii. 4—9.)

It will enable the reader to see clearly what are the truths which the Apostle intended to affirm in this passage if I set them before him in as many distinct propositions.

1. That God's judgment will be a righteous judgment, holding men responsible only for what they have, and not for what they have not, and that “*he will render to every man according to his works*,” whether he be Jew or Gentile.

2. That the goodness of God leads men to repentance—a truth, as we have seen already, clearly expressed by the prophet—“As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his ways and live.” (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.)

3. That to every man that works good, whether he has lived with the light of a revelation or without it, and who

patiently continues in welldoing, God will render glory, honour, peace, and eternal life.

4. To them that obey not the truth (observe that disobedience to truth involves the knowledge of truth), but obey unrighteousness, and are finally impenitent, God will render wrath, indignation, tribulation, and anguish at the time of the revelation of His righteous judgment.

5. That while the Apostle mentions "eternal life" (*ζωὴν αἰώνιον*) as the recompense which will be rendered to those who have worked good, he abstains from using any word which denotes duration when he speaks of the wrath, indignation, tribulation, and anguish which God will render to every man that works evil. All that he affirms is, that sin wilfully persisted in will be attended with fearful suffering on the part of the sinner.

The Apostle next proceeds to lay down, in the following remarkable words, the principles on which God will judge mankind :—

"For as many as have sinned without law" (the words "without law" here are used as equivalent to without the benefit of a Divine revelation) "shall also perish (*ἀπολοῦνται*) without law; and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law; for not the hearers of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified [margin, accounted righteous]; for when Gentiles, which have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves, in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my Gospel, by Jesus Christ." (Rom. ii. 12—16.)

In this passage the Apostle makes the following affirmations :—

1. That God in executing judgment will take into consideration the circumstances of a man's birth and his surroundings, and that He will not judge a man who has been born and educated under disadvantageous conditions as if he had been born and educated under more favourable ones.
2. That mankind are not born so depraved as to be naturally incapable of all good, but that those who have lived without the benefit of a revelation may yet do *by nature* (*φύσει*) the things taught by a revelation, *i.e.* they possess the light of conscience ; and those who act up to its light will stand in a far more favourable position than those who, with the advantage of a revelation, have not lived up to the light with which they have been favoured.

3. The word which the Apostle here uses as descriptive of the condition of those who will fall under the Divine judgment as finally impenitent is *ἀπολοῦνται*, which corresponds in meaning with the English word *perish*. He has told us in the preceding paragraph that this perishing will involve a display of the Divine indignation and wrath, and that it will be attended with tribulation and anguish ; but in neither does he drop a hint that he meant, by the "perishing" of which he speaks, continuous existence in never-ending misery —a meaning which the word he uses wholly fails to suggest in its ordinary signification.

The general meaning of these declarations of the Apostle is unmistakable. They definitely affirm that God will judge mankind hereafter according to what they have had, and not according to what they have not had ; according to what they have been responsible for doing, and not for actions for which they have had no responsibility ; and that punishment will be inflicted in exact proportion to crime. Everything, therefore, in the subsequent portion of the Epistle, where he only indirectly refers to the subject of retribution, must be

read in the light of these definite affirmations. The most important of these I have had occasion to consider in previous chapters.

### III.—THE EPISTLES TO THE EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, AND PHILEMON.

1. The Epistle to the Ephesians scarcely contains a reference to the judgments which will be incurred by the finally impenitent. Its great subject is the Church of Christ, viewed in its progress from its present state of imperfection to its future glorified condition. With respect to certain classes of sinners, whom he particularises, the Apostle simply affirms that they have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God ; and that, because of certain practices, “the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience ;” but respecting the form in which that wrath will display itself, or the duration of the sinner’s punishment, he says nothing. He also reminds the members of this Church that in their heathen state they had been dead in trespasses and sins, separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But instead of dwelling on what would have been their fate if they had died in this condition, he turns to a subject more congenial to him, and adds :—

“ But now in Christ Jesus ye that were once afar off are made nigh in the blood of Christ ; for he is our peace . . . . for through him we both ” (*i.e.* Jew and Gentile) “ have our access in one Spirit unto the Father. So, then, we are no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, being built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” (Eph. ii. 13—20.)

2. In the Epistle to the Philippians occurs the passage

which we have already considered, in which the Apostle expresses his confident expectation that when he was removed from this earthly scene he would be with Christ. That which follows is the only one in which he speaks of the retribution which awaits the wicked :—

“ For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is perdition (*ἀπώλεια*), whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” (Phil. iii. 18, 19.)

The English words “ perdition ” and “ destruction ” accurately convey the idea which is expressed by the Greek word *ἀπώλεια*, which is wholly silent respecting duration. With this the Apostle threatens those whose conduct marked them out as enemies of the cross of Christ. When he adds that he wrote this even weeping, he implies that their destruction would not be a sudden extinction of being, but that it would be one which involved sufferings fearful to contemplate ; yet he gives no hint that he believed that those sufferings would be endless.

3. The Epistle to the Colossians, while it is full of anticipations of the glories which await holy men in the perfected kingdom of God, contains only one reference to the fate which awaits evil men in the world to come, and that a very incidental one. It is as follows :—

“ For which thing’s sake cometh the wrath of God on the sons of disobedience.” (Col. iii. 6.)

What, then, are the sons of disobedience here threatened with ? The wrath of God. This, as the Apostle has explained in the Epistle to the Romans, will be accompanied with tribulation and anguish on the part of the impenitent sinner, but he nowhere even hints that this tribulation and anguish will be of endless duration.

4. The Epistle to Philemon is silent on this subject.

## IV.—THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

The first Epistle to Timothy contains no affirmation on this subject, and in the second only incidental references to it, such as—

“Now, in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth ; and some unto honour and some unto dishonour.” (ii. 20.)

“Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil ; the Lord reward him according to his works.” (iv. 14.)

“At my first defence no man took my part, but all forsook me. May it not be laid to their account.” (iv. 16.)

These utterances are simple affirmations of the Apostle’s firm belief in a judgment to come, in which God will reward and punish men according to their deeds ; but that that judgment will result in consigning all those on whom God’s wrath will fall to a condition of endless misery, the Apostle nowhere affirms.

Such are the affirmations of St. Paul respecting the retribution which will fall on the finally impenitent in the unseen world. The terms used by him, as descriptive of it, must have conveyed to ordinary speakers of Greek the idea of destruction, and not a few of destruction attended with painful suffering ; but respecting the mode in which it would be brought about, or the time which would elapse before it was accomplished, he gives us no information. Not one of the terms which he uses would, to an ordinary speaker of Greek, convey the meaning of everlasting existence in torment—which meaning must be first read into them before it can be found in them ; nor does he give a single hint to his readers that this was the sense which he intended to attach to them. His strongest expressions are, “wrath, indignation, tribulation, and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil ;” but that the Divine justice can be satisfied with

nothing but inflicting this tribulation and anguish during periods of endless duration, seems not to have entered into the mind of the Apostle.

#### V.—THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

Its author, after stating that a belief in an eternal judgment (*κρίματος αἰώνιου*), and a resurrection from the dead, were among the first principles of Christ, thus writes :—

“ For as touching those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the land that hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God ; but if it beareth thorns and briars, it is rejected, and nigh unto a curse ; whose end is to be burnt.” (Heb. vi. 4—8.)

Of whom is the sacred writer here speaking ? Certainly not of those apostates who had fallen away under the pressure of persecution, but of persons who had wilfully done so after they had enjoyed the highest privileges of Christianity, and had even had a personal experience of its blessings ; who, after they had been enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift ; after having been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and having tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come (*i.e.* the Messianic age), yet, by an act of open apostacy, had fallen away from Christ. Such a description suits only the case of persons who have had clearly set before them the character of God, as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, and who, with a full knowledge of Christianity, have once embraced it, and afterwards have been guilty of a deli-

berate apostacy. Such persons the writer considered that it was impossible to renew to repentance. Yet what is the imagery by which he illustrates their ultimate fate ? That of a field, which after it has drunk in abundance of rain, and had the benefit of careful husbandry, brings forth nothing but briars and thorns, "whose end," says he, "is to be burnt." These words certainly give no hint that the writer considered that such sinners would continue to exist for ever in never-ceasing torment.

He subsequently describes the fate of such persons in the following words :—

"For if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire, which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law died without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me ; I will recompense : and again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x. 26—31.)

Both versions translate *ἔσθιεν μελλοντος τοῦς ὑπεναντίους*, "shall devour the adversaries," as though it were merely a future tense. It must not be concealed, however, that the Greek really means, "is about to devour the adversaries," being, apparently, an allusion to the expectation of the speedy coming of Christ, so prevalent in the Apostolic age. Yet although Christ did not come personally it must not be forgotten that an event took place in that age which our Lord frequently described as his *παρουσία*, or coming ; a coming

which he declared that many of his adversaries would live to behold, and which would be attended with a terrible destruction of his foes. I allude to that great event by which the Jewish dispensation was brought to a close, and the Church, or kingdom of Christ, was established as a distinct and visible community upon earth. Our Lord thus describes this awful visitation of Providence:—

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matt. xxiv. 21.)

But although the words *μελλοντος ἐσθίειν τοὺς ὑπεναντίους* imply that the author had this event in view, yet the context shows that he intended his language to have a general application. What, then, was the judgment with which he threatens these persons of whom he speaks, by the words “a fierceness of fire which is about to devour the adversaries”? What idea, I ask, was such a metaphor calculated to convey? Not an endless existence in misery, which is incapable of being expressed by the word *ἐσθίειν*, to eat or devour, but some terrible form of destruction which he endeavours to depict in all its awfulness by his concluding words, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

#### VI.—THE EPISTLES OF JAMES, PETER, AND JUDE

In the Epistle of James we have only a few distant allusions to future retribution. Thus he writes:—

“The lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death.” (James i. 15.)

By the word “death” in this passage the Apostolic writer apparently meant a condition of man’s spiritual and moral being, in which every tendency to good has become overmastered by that which is evil. If this was his meaning, the passage is silent respecting the nature of the punishment

which awaited such a man hereafter. On the other hand, if he intended by the word "death" to affirm anything respecting the sinner's condition in the unseen world, few words are less suited to convey the idea of a continuous existence in never-ending torment than that used by him.

"For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy. Mercy glorieth against judgment." (James ii. 13.)

In this last sentence the principle is distinctly laid down, which I have already shown to be that in accordance with which God who is righteous, just, merciful, and loving, will judge the world. Mercy begins precisely at the point where strict justice ends. "Mercy glorieth against judgment."

"Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment." (James iii. 1.)

These words are a repetition, in another form, of our Lord's utterance, "To whom much hath been given, of him shall much be required."

"One only is the lawgiver and judge, even him who is able to save and to destroy." (James iv. 12.)

Here, again, we have another repetition of one of our Lord's utterances, the meaning of which we have already considered: "Fear not them that kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fear him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into Gehenna; yea, I say unto you, fear him." (Luke xii. 4, 5.) Once more:—

"My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul ( $\psi\nu\chi\acute{\imath}\acute{\imath}$ , not  $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha$ ) from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (James v. 19, 20.)

The soul here is to be saved from "death," not from a continuous existence in never-ending torment.

In these passages the apostolic writer does nothing more than affirm the great truth of human responsibility, and

assert that God will reward and punish men according to their deeds. Respecting the nature of that punishment he is silent, and the language which he uses fails to suggest the idea that it will be of endless duration.

The First Epistle of Peter contains the remarkable affirmation respecting our Lord's preaching to the spirits of the antediluvians, and the preaching of the Gospel to the dead. As the discussion of this subject involves the all-important question whether there is reason for believing that human probation terminates at death, or that a change in the state of mind in which the overwhelming majority of mankind leave this world may take place as long as the mediatorial reign of Christ continues, we must reserve its consideration to a separate chapter.

The authenticity of the Second Epistle of St. Peter is far more questionable than that of any writing in the New Testament. Large numbers of eminent critics have expressed the gravest doubts respecting its genuineness ; and it is impossible to deny that the reasons which have been urged against its authenticity are very strong. This being so, it is useless to quote it in proof of any position which is not clearly set forth in those sacred writings respecting whose right to a place in the Canon no doubt has ever been entertained in the Church. For the authenticity of the Epistle of St. Jude the evidence is stronger, but yet weighty doubts have been entertained respecting its canonical authority. I mention these facts because of the peculiar character of their positions respecting the subject we are now considering. One thing, however, is worthy of particular attention. The context of those portions of these epistles which bear on our present subject render it certain, unless all certainty in criticism must be abandoned, either that the author of the Second Epistle of St. Peter borrowed from Jude, or that the author of Jude borrowed from the Second Epistle of St. Peter. Critics

of great weight are of opinion that the Epistle of St. Jude is the original, and that those portions of 2 Peter which so closely resembles it are the copy. If this be so, it throws great suspicion on the authenticity of the latter; for it is incredible that such a man as the Apostle Peter, writing with the full weight of apostolical authority, would have borrowed from another writer.

The author of the Epistle of St. Jude describes himself as a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James. This description represents him as one of those who are referred to in the Gospels as the brethren of our Lord, of whom one was named Jude; and as St. John tells us that they did not believe in him at a late period of his ministry, it is hardly possible, notwithstanding all the arguments which have been urged to the contrary, to identify him with Jude the Apostle. One very remarkable characteristic of this brief epistle is a reference to apocryphal writings such as occurs in no other writing in the New Testament. These epistles therefore belong to that class of writings respecting the canonical authority of which grave doubts have been entertained in the Church; and thus they are writings of inferior authority. With these cautions I will now proceed to examine their affirmations respecting the judgments which will be executed on sinners in the unseen world. Of these the two following passages will serve as illustrations:—

“ For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (*ταρταρώσας*), and committed them to pits of darkness to be reserved unto judgment, and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah, with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood on the world of the ungodly, and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example to those that should live ungodly; the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to

keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment; but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement and despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they tremble not to rail at dignities. Whereas angels, though greater in power and strength, bring not a railing judgment against them before the Lord." (2 Peter ii. 4—11, &c.)

The corresponding passage in Jude is as follows:—

"And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting (*aīt̄ios*) bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over unto fornication, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire (*πυρὸς αἰώνιον*). Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at naught dominion, and rail at dignities. But Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." (Jude 6—19.)

A few verses further on we have a quotation from the apocryphal book of Enoch. The author having previously described those respecting whom he was writing as autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea foaming out their own shame; wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever (*εἰς τὸν αἰώνα*), adds, "and to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness, which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (Jude 14, 15.)

To enable the reader to form an accurate judgment respect-

ing the nature of the positions taken by the writers of these two Epistles respecting future retribution, it is necessary that he should read through the whole of 2 Peter ii., and carefully compare it with the Epistle of St. Jude; for whatever ideas we may entertain respecting these two Epistles as portions of canonical Scripture, they undoubtedly throw light on the opinions which were held on this subject at the time when they were written. The two passages above cited, however, make it clear that it is impossible to base upon them a definite theory respecting either the nature or the duration of the punishment which awaits the finally impenitent in the unseen world; the judgments referred to, with the exception of those inflicted on the fallen angels, being for the most part of a temporal character.

It is true that St. Jude speaks of the cities of the plain *as set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal (aiōniov) fire.* What was the meaning which he intended to convey by the word here rendered "eternal" can only be a matter of conjecture. That he did not use it as meaning either "everlasting" or "age-long" is evident, for he could not but have been aware that the fire which consumed them had been extinct for centuries. Probably all that he intended was that the judgment in question had been permanent in its effects, and that the ruin of these cities was complete, and as such it was a standing memorial to all future generations of God's indignation against sin. So the author of 2 Peter ii. evidently understood it; for the language used respecting it in Jude is thus softened down by the latter writer:—

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, *having made them an example* to them that should live ungodly." The Greek in 2 Peter ii. is ὑπόδειγμα τεθείκως, and in Jude πρόκεινται δεῖγμα. Both expressions convey the idea of a palpable

and visible warning, and therefore neither the one nor the other can be descriptive of the nature or the duration of the punishment which will overtake those who are finally impenitent in the unseen world.

But the allusions to the angels that sinned are so peculiar as to require a brief notice. In 2 Peter ii. they are described as cast down into hell and committed to pits of darkness to be reserved unto judgment. The word here translated "cast down to hell" is *ταρταρώσας*, meaning "thrust down into Tartarus." This word is used nowhere else in the New Testament, being of purely pagan origin, and denoting the place where, according to the fictions of the Greek poets, the Titans and extremely impious men were punished, but the terrors of which, if we may believe a nearly contemporary Roman poet, had ceased to exert an influence on any but women and children. It seems scarcely credible, familiar as he was with the idea of Gehenna, that the Apostle Peter should have made use of a word which was associated with nothing but pagan fictions, and which had even then fallen into contempt.

The account of the fallen angels and their punishment, as given by St. Jude, is as follows:—

"And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting (*αιδίοις*) bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." The word here translated "everlasting" more nearly corresponds with our modern idea of duration without limits than any other word in the New Testament.

What, then, do these passages affirm respecting the condition of the fallen angels? Both writers represent them as kept in a state of duress: 2 Peter ii. as thrust down to Tartarus, and committed to pits of darkness; and Jude as kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Both these passages, then, affirm

that they are kept in close confinement, and consequently that they are not ranging at large tempting men. In what relation they considered these fallen angels to stand to the Satan of the Old Testament and to the devil and the demons ( $\tauὰ \xiαμόνια$ ) of the New, where all these are spoken of as at liberty and in a state of constant activity for evil, it is difficult to imagine. Even St. Jude speaks of the devil only a few verses further on as engaged in disputing with the archangel Michael about the body of Moses; and St. Peter, in his unquestionably genuine epistle, describes him as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour; and all the other writers of the New Testament describe "the devil" ( $\deltaιάβολος$ ) and "the demons" ( $\tauὰ \xiαμόνια$ ) as in a state of constant activity in opposition to Christ and His gospel. I draw attention to these singularities of statement for the purpose of showing how useless it would be to quote either of these Epistles as authoritative on our present subject.

#### VII.—THE APOCALYPSE.

It now remains for us to consider what light the Book of Revelation throws on the question of retribution.

This book being beyond question a book of symbols, it is difficult to determine what are the realities to which they point. The greatness of this difficulty is proved by the fact that although many hundreds of treatises have been composed with a view of interpreting its symbolism, hardly any two agree together as to its meaning; and to this hour the most eminent critics and commentators are at issue as to the fundamental principles on which it is to be interpreted. Still more, while numerous books have been written, which have been very popular in their day, for the purpose of assigning to these symbols a definite prophetic meaning, and of pointing out their fulfilment in the facts of history, yet on a careful analysis the interpretations of them have been

proved to be based on purely arbitrary principles ; and when in reliance on them commentators have ventured to predict the future, their predictions have been uniformly falsified by the event. In the present state of our knowledge all that we can venture to affirm with certainty respecting this book is, that it was intended to be a strong affirmation of the ultimate triumph of Christ over every opposing power, and as such an encouragement to the Church in times of darkness, trial, and persecution. Certain it is that the key by which its symbolism can be interpreted so as to be fitted to the facts of history remains undiscovered to this hour, each writer having his own particular system of interpretation. The most probable opinion is that the seer's perspective was limited to the events of the times which were then impending. It should further be noted that this book belongs to that class of writings respecting whose canonical authority serious doubts were entertained in portions of the early Church, the books in question being the Epistle to the Hebrews, that of James, 2nd Peter, 2nd and 3rd of John, Jude, and the Revelation. With these cautions I will now proceed to consider the most important passages in this book which bear on our present subject.

Each of the seven Epistles concludes with a promise and a warning, of which the following are the most important :—

1. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Rev. ii. 7); the warning being the threat of removing the candlestick, which represents the Church, out of its place.
2. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Rev. ii. 11.)
3. "And I will kill her children with death." (Rev. ii. 23.)
4. "He that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations ; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter

are broken to shivers, as I also have received of my Father ; and I will give him the morning star.” (Rev. ii. 26—28.)

5. “I come quickly ; hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown. He that overcometh I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more ; and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.” (Rev. iii. 11—13.)

These affirmations are all of so general a character that it is impossible to erect any definite theory upon them. The fourth evidently presupposes the existence of adverse world-powers at the time spoken of, over which “he that overcometh, and keepeth Christ’s works unto the end,” is to have authority, and which he is ultimately to break in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

We now come to the Apocalypse proper. It consists of two scenes, an earthly and a heavenly one. The earthly one depicts the Church and the individual believer as in a state of persecution, trial, and suffering ; the heavenly one delineates both as triumphant and glorious, which state of things is ultimately transferred to the earthly one. This triumphant state, however, is uniformly depicted by the aid of symbols derived from scenes of earthly magnificence, and not unfrequently from ideal ones, such as a city whose gates are pearls, and the street of which is of pure gold, as it were transparent glass ; and whose height, breadth, and length are all equal. The condition of the saints being thus depicted by the aid of earthly symbols, we may conclude that that of the enemies of Christ will be delineated in symbols of a similar character, it being absurd to assume that the one is intended to be symbolical and the other literal. Thus we read—

“ And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of

hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig-tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken with a great wind. And the heavens were removed as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich and the strong, and every bondman and freeman hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains ; and they say to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ; for the great day of their wrath is come ; and who is able to stand ?" (Rev. vi. 12—17.)

Here we are evidently in the region of symbolism of a highly poetic character, which none will take to be descriptive of realities, except a few extreme literalists, with whom it would be a waste of time to argue. The description is evidently intended to impress those that read it with the idea that a terrible destruction awaits the persistent enemies of God ; but beyond this we can affirm nothing.

In Revelation xiv. we thus read :—

" And another angel, a third, followed them, saying, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger ; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb ; and the smoke of their torment goeth up unto ages of ages ; and they have no rest day nor night, they that worship the beast and his image, or whoso receiveth the mark of his name." (Rev. xiv. 9—11.)

To determine the meaning of this passage it will be necessary to set before the reader the chief points of the author's description of the beast and of his image, of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and of the things—I cannot say persons

—which will be cast into it, as they are set before us in the preceding and following chapters. And first of the beast :—

“ And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were as it were the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion ; and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death, and his death-stroke was healed.” (Rev. xiii. 1—3. See the remainder of the description.) The seer then beholds a second beast coming up out of the earth, “ and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed, . . . . saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image of the beast. . . . And it was given unto him to give breath unto it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all the small and the great, the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead ; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” This number is 666. (Rev. xiii. 11—17.) This second beast is elsewhere designated “ the false prophet.”

“ And the fifth angel poured out his bowl [of the wrath of God] on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was darkened, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.” (Rev. xvi. 10.)

“ And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon,

and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs ; for they are the spirits of devils [demons] working signs." (Rev. xvi. 13, 14.)

In the seventeenth chapter we are introduced to the first beast, with a harlot woman mounted on him, having on her forehead the following name, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth." The seer then affirms that the seven heads of the beast are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth ; that they are also seven kings, of whom five are fallen, one is, and one is yet to come ; and that the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition ; and that his ten horns are ten kings, which have no kingdom as yet. And he concludes his explanation by affirming, that "the woman that thou sawest is *that great city*, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." The great city, which was then reigning over the kings of the earth, is obviously heathen Rome, which had been recently drunken with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus.

One passage more, as to the fate of the beast, and the false prophet, must be quoted :—

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together, to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet : they twain were cast alive into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone ; and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even with the sword that came forth out of his mouth." (Rev. xix. 19—21.)

The reader should observe that in Rev. xix. the fate of being cast into the lake burning with fire and brimstone, is decreed against every one that worships the beast and his

image, and who receives his mark ; that in chapter xiii. the whole world are described as doing so ; and in the same chapter the image of the beast is said to cause as many as refused to worship itself to be killed. Further, so numerous are his adherents that they are described in chapter xviii. as consisting of peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

Who then is the beast ? For if these passages are intended to refer to future retribution, it is most important that his identity should be determined. To this question commentators have returned answers of the most varied character. Some have affirmed that he is Nero ; others, the succession of Roman emperors ; others, the pagan empire itself, others the revived Roman empire of the West under Charlemagne and his successors ; others, the Pope ; others the Papal system and the Romish Church ; others Mahomet. Romanists have affirmed that Luther, in their mode of spelling his name, contains the number of the beast ; there have not been wanting those who have affirmed that he is Napoleon I. ; and beside these, there are a large number of persons who take the safe course of deferring the fulfilment of this prophecy to some future period, despite the affirmation of the seer that the things of which he prophesied must shortly come to pass ; and they affirm that the beast is an antichrist yet to be revealed.

Again, who is the second beast, or false prophet ? What also is the image of the beast, to which the false prophet imparts breath, enabling it to speak, and which is able to direct that those who refuse to worship itself should be killed ? I need not say that the answers which have been given to these questions are multiform, and of a most uncertain character. Yet if the proclamation of the angel is intended to be a literal description of the fate which awaits the innumerable multitudes who are here described as the adherents of the beast, we surely

have a right to expect that men should not be left in doubt who the beast, the false prophet, and the image of the beast are, and what is the nature of that sin which constitutes adherence to them. It is evident that up to the present day the Church has failed to discover the key which is capable of unlocking the secrets of this prophecy, and of assigning a definite meaning to its various symbols ; and it is hardly too much to say that the various commentaries which have been written on this book are little more than guesses founded on fanciful analogies.

Amidst this mass of uncertainty, however, one thing seems certain, that this book is a drama, intended to depict by the aid of scenery consisting of a number of symbolical representations, the ultimate triumph of Christ over every conceivable form of hostile power. As long as we study it in this point of view we are safe, and the book itself becomes to the Church of all ages a source of encouragement during the various trials and discouragements which it has to encounter during this earthly scene, from whatever source they may arise ; and it conveys the assurance that, be they what they may, Christ will ultimately conquer. But when we attempt to assign to each of its symbols a definite meaning, which can be realised in historic fact either of the past, or the present, and, I should add, of the future, the experience of eighteen centuries of interpretation proves that we are attempting to solve the insoluble. If the assigning a definite meaning to each of the scenic representations of this book, and a fulfilment of them in historic fact, be the right way of studying it, then it is difficult to understand how it can be "a revelation of things which must shortly come to pass," for now, after eighteen centuries of careful study, the whole Church is at hopeless disagreement as to their meaning. But if, on the contrary, its purport be that which I have above intimated, it is not only a revelation of things which must shortly come

to pass—the time of its composition being on every theory one of terrible persecution—but it has come to pass during all those times when the Church has had to struggle with open enemies or inward foes, from all which struggles Christ has emerged triumphant.

That the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the image of the beast are all symbols, forming portions of the scenery which presented themselves to the seer's mind, it is impossible to doubt. They neither have nor can have an individual existence. All four are apparently designed to represent different forms of worldly, it may be even spiritual, power, standing out in opposition to the kingdom of Christ. But if these are scenic symbolical representations, who are their adherents? And what is the lake burning with fire and brimstone into which the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and their adherents are ultimately cast, and where afterwards two other symbolical beings, Death and Hades—the latter being the underworld and the former having no other existence than as a poetic creation—Milton's Death, for example—are sent to join them after Christ's final triumph over evil? In fact, the entire book consists of a series of symbolic scenic representations. Such is unquestionably the description of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, a city composed of "pure gold, like unto pure glass," twelve thousand cubits in height, twelve thousand cubits in length, and twelve thousand cubits in breadth, with twelve foundations, each composed of precious stones, and twelve gates, each composed of a single pearl. It is impossible to understand these things as intended to denote actual realities, or that—in contradiction to the words of Him who said, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father . . . for the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such doth

the Father seek to be his worshippers"—the glorified Messianic kingdom will have a local centre.

As a further illustration of the scenic and ideal character of the imagery of this book, I would draw the reader's attention to the description of the destruction of the mystic Babylon, which is identified with the woman riding on the beast, the woman being subsequently affirmed to be that great city which was then reigning over the kings of the earth. On its fall it is described as become the habitation of devils (*i.e.* demons), and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. All this is surely poetic imagery. Then follows a lengthened description of the lamentations over her fall by the merchants of the earth who had been made rich by her luxuries, and who are represented as standing at a distance for fear of her torment. Surely it is impossible to read this description without arriving at the conclusion that it is an ideal one. The Babylon in question, which is represented throughout the prophecy as the seat of the kingdom of the beast, is in this description represented as the centre of the commerce of the whole world. This Rome never was, and from its situation never can be. If this description is other than an ideal one, the Babylon of this lamentation far more closely resembles modern London than any city which has existed either in ancient or modern times, but the descriptions in the preceding chapters of the Apocalyptic Babylon are totally inapplicable to it. It is easy to say with the Futurist, that at some period yet to come Rome may become the centre of the world's commerce, and thus its fall may correspond with the description here given of the fall of Babylon. Nothing is easier than for the interpreter of prophecy to take refuge in the future, because until it arrives it is impossible to bring his *vaticinations*, however extravagant they may be, to the test of fact, even if he affirms that the New Jerusalem will literally descend from

heaven, constructed precisely as it is described in the last chapters of this book, or that a temple will yet be erected there, constructed precisely after the model of that described in Ezekiel's vision, in which will be again celebrated a system of ritual worship. My strong conviction is that whoever reads Revelation xviii., unprejudiced by system, will arise from its perusal with the conviction that it is intended by the writer, without pledging himself to any of its details, to be a symbolical description of the overthrow of every earthly power which rises in opposition to the kingdom of Christ.

Again, after the fall of Babylon the Lord Jesus is depicted as issuing from heaven mounted on a white horse, arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood, with a sharp sword issuing from His mouth, and as having on His garment and on His thigh written, "King of kings and Lord of lords," followed by the armies of heaven, likewise mounted on white horses, clothed in fine linen pure and white. Against Him the beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies, gather together to make war. The result of the battle is that the beast and the false prophet are both captured, and are cast alive into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; and the kings with their armies are killed by the sword which proceeded out of the mouth of Him who sat on the white horse. Another great battle is described as taking place after the Millennium, to engage in which armies as numerous as the sand of the sea are gathered together. These encompass the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire comes down out of heaven and devours them. On this occasion the devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, to which the beast and the false prophet had been consigned more than a thousand years previously, to be tormented day and night unto the ages of ages. Can any doubt that we are here in the presence of ideal symbolism?

On this follows the judgment, and the final triumph of Christ, the result of which is described as follows:—

“And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire, This is the second death, even the lake of fire.” (Rev. xx. 14.)

In this passage we are unquestionably in the presence of two ideal creations. Death is certainly not a being who has an actual existence, and hades is the underworld, the abode of departed spirits. Consequently we have no less than four personifications—viz. the beast, the false prophet, death, and hades—described as cast into the lake of fire, the smoke of the burning of which goes up unto the ages of ages. But if those who are described as cast into the lake of fire are ideal symbols, how is it possible to affirm that the lake of fire and the other adjuncts of the description are not symbols likewise, and that the smoke of their torments ascending up to the ages of ages is not of a similar character?

The beast being a symbol, who, then, are his worshippers and the worshippers of his image to which the false prophet imparts life, and those who have received his mark, who are described as drinking of the wine of the wrath of God which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger, and as tormented unto ages of ages with fire and brimstone? Surely, if this is to be the literal fate of the worshippers of the beast and his image, it is of the highest importance that we should be left in no doubt what the beast and his image are intended to represent, or who they are that bear his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. But respecting these things certainty there is none; for as to who they are each commentator has a theory of his own, and their number is legion. This difficulty is increased by the fact that while in the angelic proclamation the adherents of the beast are threatened with being cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, in the nineteenth chapter, which describes the final victory of the Lamb, while the beast and the false prophet—i.e. the

symbols—are described as cast alive into this lake, their adherents are affirmed to have been killed by the sword which proceeded out of the mouth of Him that sat on the horse, and all the birds to have been filled with their flesh.

But the angelic proclamation, if viewed as a statement of fact, and not an ideal delineation, contains a startling affirmation which it is impossible to leave unnoticed, viz. that the adherents of the beast will be tormented with fire and brimstone, *in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb*; *that they will have rest neither day nor night, and that the smoke of their torment will ascend up unto ages of ages.* Are we then to accept it as a literal fact that He who was habitually moved with compassion at the sight of human suffering and human sorrow; that He who wept over Jerusalem in foresight of its impending ruin; that He who uttered the parables of the lost sheep, of the prodigal son, and of the good Samaritan; that He who affirmed that He came not to judge the world, but to save the world; that he who said to Pilate, "Therefore he that hath delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin;" that He who, when He was being judicially murdered, said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"—looks on while these innumerable multitudes who are described in this book as the adherents of the beast, are tormented with fire and brimstone, from which they have rest neither day nor night; or that the author of the book intended this to be a literal description of actual occurrences in the unseen world? Surely if this terrible picture is intended to be other than an ideal poetic symbol, descriptive of the utter destruction of every world-power which sets itself in opposition to the kingdom of God, it does more to render questionable St. John's authorship of this book than all the arguments which have been adduced in favour of it to support it.

But the explanatory vision recorded in the seventeenth

chapter hints in dark and enigmatical terms that the symbolism of this book was not intended to unfold the realities of the unseen world, but to be descriptive of divine judgments in the present world. I say in enigmatical terms, because if the seer had made use of plain language he would have exposed himself and the Church to the charge of a treasonable conspiracy against the existing order of things, and have kindled anew the fires of persecution, from which the Church had only just emerged. Nothing would have more aroused the wrath of the existing world-powers than an open statement of those hopes and expectations of Christians respecting the future, which are here veiled in poetic symbols. Speaking on the same subject, St. Paul, as we have seen, adopted a similar mode of expressing himself, though one far less complicated.

In this explanatory vision a fresh symbol is introduced, viz. that of a harlot woman seated on many waters. The seer is then conveyed into a wilderness, where he beholds this woman mounted on a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, and having on her forehead a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth. This woman is further represented "as drunken with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus." The beast on which she sits is then identified with the beast of the former visions by his having seven heads and ten horns. The seer is informed that the seven heads are symbolical of seven mountains—the well-known description of Rome—on which the woman sits; and also they are symbolical of seven kings, of whom five were then fallen, one was existing, and one was not yet come, but who when he came would continue a short time. The beast himself is also symbolical of an eighth king, who would go into perdition. The ten horns are also interpreted to represent ten other kings, who had received no

kingdom when the seer wrote, but who were to receive power for a short time with the eighth king, and would concur with him in waging war with the Lamb. The seer is further informed that the waters on which he had seen the woman sit were symbolical of multitudes, and peoples, and nations, and tongues. Finally, he is informed that the harlot woman is a symbol of that great city which was then reigning over the kings of the earth.

Such is the angel's interpretation of the symbolism before us. Can there be any doubt that it was intended to be a symbolical representation of that great world-power which was then ruling over the fairest regions of the earth, whose seat was Rome, the rulers of which had been recently drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus? What, then, is the object of the visions in which this symbolism is embodied? Evidently to proclaim its utter, final, and irrevocable destruction, and the triumph over it of the Church of Jesus Christ, which it persecuted and attempted to destroy. This then, without attempting to interpret the details, is the general purport of these visions, expressed, as they intentionally are, in dark enigmas. This being so, they were intended to be descriptive, not of the realities of the unseen world, but of the downfall of this great persecuting world-power, and all similar ones which set themselves in opposition to Christ and his gospel, and also of Christ's ultimate triumph over all earthly opposition. Consequently their terrible imagery is intended to be descriptive of occurrences in this world, and not to disclose the realities of the world beyond the grave. It is, therefore, useless to base on the imagery we have been considering any theory as to the nature or the duration of the punishments which will be undergone in the unseen world by those sinners who are finally impenitent. Kingdoms, states, societies, and churches can only be judged on this side the grave.

My general conclusion, therefore, is that the affirmations of the apostolic writers respecting the condition of sinners in the unseen world are general, and not specific. They affirm in no doubtful language that such will undergo the awful consequences of the wrath of God against sin which is wilfully persisted in. Their final destiny is denoted by the word destruction, or some other of kindred meaning; and in not a few instances the New Testament language implies that their ultimate destruction will be brought about by a course of painful suffering—suffering in exact proportion to their guilt; but gives no hint that the terms employed to denote it are used in a different sense from that which they bear in ordinary conversational Greek. All, therefore, that reason and revelation affirm is that man will survive the stroke of death as long as is necessary in order that the apparent imperfections of God's present moral government may receive a perfect vindication in a world to come; and although the promise of everlasting life is in the New Testament made to the holy, no declaration can be found therein which affirms that evil beings will continue to exist for ever, or that those in whom all good has become extinct are incapable of being destroyed by sin, in a manner analogous to that in which physical diseases in the course of God's ordinary providence destroy the body; nor has reason anything to say to the contrary.

On the following points a uniformity of statement pervades the sacred writings: that God will judge the world in righteousness; that He will judge individual men according to the precise degree of their responsibility; that He will reward and punish them according to their works, and that it will be finally well with the righteous and ill with the wicked; but, as it is a matter of our Lord's express affirmation that the knowledge of the times and the seasons of God's providential government formed no portion of the revelations which were imparted to the Apostles, so their writings lead

us to believe that the nature and the duration of the punishments which await impenitent sinners in the unseen world were not made to them a subject of special revelation. The gospel which they preached was a gospel of good news ; and the words which Abraham in the parable is described as addressing to Dives are equally true of those who, with full light and knowledge, reject it, viz. that they will not be persuaded to embrace it, although all the secrets of the unseen world were disclosed to their view. This being so we must be content to know that a time is coming when God will render to the righteous and to sinners according to their works ; that He will do this in conformity with that which man's conscience and moral sense will recognise as perfect righteousness ; and that a time is coming in the future when everything, whether in heaven, in earth, or in the underworld, will be finally put under the feet of the Son of God, when God will become all in all.

This, however, cannot be accomplished as long as a rebellious will continues to exist in opposition to him.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DOES HUMAN PROBATION TERMINATE AT DEATH?

THIS question is of the highest importance in connection with our present subject, because, if human probation is extended beyond the grave, it frees us from that overwhelming mass of difficulties with which the theories we have been considering are encumbered. It will, however, probably be contended that all inquiry into this subject is barred by the silence of the New Testament respecting it ; and that it is incredible, if the moral and spiritual condition in which men die can undergo a change for the better in the unseen world, that such a fact should not have been announced in the pages of revelation in terms that are clear and unmistakable. To this I answer—

1. While no passage can be found in Scripture which definitely affirms that man's probation is confined to the present life, there are two passages in the First Epistle of St. Peter which imply—I may almost say assert—that there is a possibility, at least for those who have had no opportunity of accepting the gospel here, of accepting it in Hades.

2. Even if it be admitted that the New Testament is silent on this subject, that silence is no proof that human probation terminates with the present life. The Old Testament Scriptures present us with a case precisely analogous. They contain only two positive affirmations, and those in Scriptures

of a very late date, that a judgment to come awaits man in the unseen world, in which he will be rewarded or punished according to his works ; and of the two passages referred to, one affirms not a general, but only a partial resurrection.\* Yet this silence respecting a future state of retribution proves nothing ; for as we have seen, while many of the Old Testament saints contemplated this life as the only sphere where it was possible to enjoy the light of God's countenance, and Hades as the region of darkness and of gloom, yet a few of them entertained a firm conviction that God would not desert them in death, and that they would continue to live in His presence, where there would be fulness of joy, and at His right hand, where there would be pleasures for evermore.

On what, then, was this conviction founded ? Certainly not on any express affirmations respecting a future state which are to be found in the pages of the Old Testament, but on inferences from the character of that God in whom they trusted as holy, just, merciful, and good. Thus our Lord tells the Sadducees that they might have inferred that man will survive the stroke of death from the Divine declaration, “ I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” “ God,” says he, “ is not the God of the

\* The passages referred to are the following :—

“ This is the end of the matter, all hath been heard : Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man ; for God shall bring every work into judgment, and every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Eccles. xii. 13, 14.)

And—

“ And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan. xii. 2—4.)

The general opinion among critics now is that the Book of Ecclesiastes was one of the latest written books in the Canon. The important point for the reader to observe is that both these books were composed long after those writers of the Old Testament, who have expressed the strongest hopes that they would survive the stroke of death, had passed away from this earthly scene, and consequently that these could not have been the foundation of their hopes.

dead," *i.e.* of the non-existent, "but of the living ; for all live unto Him."

This passage was probably selected by Him as being the clearest in the entire Pentateuch from which a life to come may be inferred ; yet it is an inference only, and not a positive affirmation, that a future state of existence awaits man after the dissolution of his body.

What, then, is the bearing of this silence on the question before us ? I answer, that even if there is no affirmation in the New Testament that man's probation does not terminate at death, it by no means proves that there will not be a probation beyond the grave for those innumerable multitudes of mankind who have not been guilty of a direct rejection of Christ in this life, or who have never heard of the gospel of His grace, or who have heard only an imperfect version of it. This silence simply places us in the same position respecting a probation in the unseen world as the Old Testament saints were in respect of a life to come. The revelation under which they lived conveyed to them no direct assurance of such a life. Their faith in one was an inference founded on the character of God. Why may we not draw a similar inference—that a state of probation will be afforded in the unseen world to those whose probation here has been passed under the unfavourable conditions to which I have above referred—from that character as it is revealed in Jesus Christ and manifested in his entire work, actions, and teaching, according to his declaration as it is recorded in St. John's Gospel in the following utterance :—

"If ye had known me ye should have known my Father also ; from henceforth ye know him and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you and yet dost thou not know me, Philip ? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; how sayest thou, Show

us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father, abiding in me, doeth his works. Believe me, that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." (John xiv. 7—11.)

These words are an express affirmation on the part of the Divine speaker that in His person, actions, and teaching, He is a revelation of the moral perfections of God. This being so, it will be necessary that I should set before the reader the most important points of the character of God as it is revealed in the person, actions, and teaching of Jesus Christ, in order that we may be able to enter on the consideration whether it is consistent with the perfections of God that the probation of every member of the human family should terminate at death; and whether we have not the strongest reasons for believing that those innumerable multitudes of mankind, whose probation here has been passed under unfavourable conditions, will have one afforded them hereafter under more favourable ones.

#### I.—THE REVELATION OF THE PATERNITY OF GOD.

In the Sermon on the Mount we have the following affirmations respecting it:—

"Ye therefore shall be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.)

"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them, else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. vi. 1.)

"That thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee." (Matt. vi. 4.)

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him; after this manner therefore pray ye, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'" (Matt. vi. 8, 9.)

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt. vi. 14, 15.)

“That thou be not seen unto men to fast, but of thy Father which seeth in secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee.” (Matt. vi. 18.)

“Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and your heavenly Father feedeth them.” (Matt. vi. 26.)

“For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” (Matt. vi. 32.)

It will doubtless be objected by the holders of certain theological systems that God is only the Father of the holy, and that He has ceased to stand in a fatherly relation to the sinful ; and consequently, inasmuch as man is born in sin, he is not born a child of God. My reply to this is the following assertions of our Lord :—

“That ye may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust.” (Matt. v. 45.)

God’s causing His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and His sending rain on the just and on the unjust, is here affirmed by the Divine speaker to be a manifestation of His universal Fatherhood.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.” (Matt. vii. 11.)

Here the feeling of paternity, as it exists in man, is declared to be the image of paternity as it exists in God.

“And they brought unto him little children that he should touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. And when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them :

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in nowise enter therein. And he took them up in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them." (Mark x. 13—16.)

The issue before us is a simple one. Did our Lord view little children as being, or as not being, children of God? Or did He consider as outcasts from His Father's paternal love those at whose being forbidden to approach to Him He was moved with indignation, whom He took up in His arms, laid His hands on, and blessed, saying that whoever should not receive the kingdom of God as a little child should in no wise enter therein?

I fully admit that a son who is persistently rebellious may justly forfeit the privileges of sonship; but the question here is whether God is revealed by our Lord as standing to all mankind in the relation of a Father, or whether an overwhelming majority of the human race no longer participate in the blessings of Divine Fatherhood, but are viewed by Him as outcasts from His family? It will hardly be contended that the utterer of the parable of the Prodigal Son did not intend to depict the father in the parable as yearning with the feelings of a parent over his lost son; and that he is not intended to be the image of the relation in which God stands as Father even to those who are infected with the evil spirit of which the prodigal son is the type. "He is kind," as St. Luke elsewhere reports our Lord's words, "unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

I conclude, therefore, that our Lord's teaching, as it is recorded in the Gospels, sets forth the all-important truth that the relation in which God stands to mankind as their creator and preserver is best represented by that which a father bears

to his offspring ; and that man being made in the image of God, the parental and the filial relations in man are images—very imperfect images, I grant, but yet images—of the perfect reality which exists in the Godhead between the Father and the Son ; only God's fatherly character towards His creatures is more perfect, more loving, more tender, and more holy than the relation which exists between a human parent and his child ; and as nothing but some crime of the deepest dye can destroy the parental feeling which parents entertain for their offspring, so nothing but a condition of wickedness on the part of man which is past all the means of cure that are capable of being brought to bear on a moral being, can sever the relation in which God stands to men as their Creator and their Father. So completely does this view of the relation in which God stands to man pervade the teaching of the New Testament, that wherever the Divine name is mentioned His fatherly relationship is almost universally presupposed. Thus, He is the Father who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that the world through Him might be saved ; He is the Father of mercies, the God of love, the God of all comfort, the God of patience and consolation ; the God of hope, the God of peace ; the Father who sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world ; the Father who willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ; the Father, whose character is the counterpart of that of the shepherd who, on finding his lost sheep, when he has recovered it, returns from the pursuit, laying it on his shoulders rejoicing ; and of the father who, when he sees the prodigal yet afar off, is moved with compassion, runs to meet him, falls on his neck, and kisses him.

This parental character as ascribed to God is meaningless unless it involves the primary moral conceptions which enter into the idea of fatherhood in man. Among these, therefore, must be love in its purest form : a watchful care for the well-

being of His children, compassion for their weaknesses, a careful allowance for the power of internal and external temptation as compared with their strength to resist it, the exercise of impartial justice between the different members of His family, the not holding one responsible for the sins of another, and the not punishing as sin that of which a man has had nothing to do with the causation. All these and similar qualities are essential to the conception of fatherhood, and the human father in whom they are wanting would be properly designated as destitute of proper parental feelings. These qualities must, therefore, exist in absolute perfection in Him who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a perfection of which the gift of Jesus Christ for man constitutes the measure and the revelation.

## II.—THE BENEVOLENCE OF CHRIST.

It is almost a platitude to affirm that the portraiture of our Lord, as it is delineated in the Gospels, constitutes an embodiment of benevolence in the purest form. So perfect is it that the highest flights of poetic imagination have never succeeded in depicting a benevolence equally perfect. It is a benevolence not of sentiment but of deeds; nor is it of deeds which cost little or nothing, but of an habitual sacrifice of self, persistently carried out through an entire life, and culminating in an ignominious death. It is, in fact, one continuous act of self-sacrifice for the good of others, manifesting itself in unceasing efforts to cure the moral and spiritual diseases of those with whom He came in contact, to elevate the degraded to a life of holiness, to impart hope to the penitent, strength to the weak, and finally a carrying out of self-sacrifice to its extremest limits, by giving His life for the life of the world, not in the tranquil death of a Socrates, but in the ignominy and the unspeakable anguish of the cross.

If, then, it is true that "he that hath seen Jesus Christ hath seen the Father," the benevolence of this Divine life must be a revelation of the benevolence which exists in God. It is impossible that God can be less benevolent than Christ. The entire work of Jesus Christ is, therefore, a manifestation of the love for man which exists in God. "Herein," says St. John, "was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 9, 10.)

### III.—THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST FOR SUFFERERS AND SINNERS.

To enable me to set the compassion of Christ, in all its reality and fulness, before the reader, it would be necessary to quote a large portion of the Gospels. In them He is depicted as habitually moved with compassion at the sight of suffering, and even for sin, so far as it is the result of human weakness, and not of a will with deliberate purpose set in opposition to the holiness of God as revealed in Him. Of His compassion for human suffering a single illustration must suffice. Thus St. Matthew writes:—

"And when evening was come, they brought unto him many possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, *Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases.*" (Matt. viii. 16, 17.)

This is undoubtedly a very singular application of a passage from the Old Testament. It is inconceivable that the Evangelist meant to affirm that our Lord, in curing diseases, took them on Himself, or bore them about with Him. It is obvious, therefore, that the thing intended is, that He was moved with such deep compassion at the sight of human woe,

that He seemed as if He himself were bearing the burden of the diseases He cured.

Of His compassion for sin into which men are drawn by weakness and temptation, we have a portraiture given us in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, which is so perfect that any attempt to portray it in any other language than that of the Evangelist is to mar its perfection. I shall therefore simply quote his opening words:—

"Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him for to hear him. And both the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." In answer to this objection our Lord uttered the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son. Let the reader study them, and he will require no further proof of the Divine compassion for sinners which dwelt in the bosom of Jesus Christ, verifying His own declaration, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Another striking example is that of the woman taken in adultery:—

"And Jesus lifted up himself and said, Woman, where are they?" i.e. her accusers. "Did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way; from henceforth sin no more." (John viii. 10, 11.)

Such is the compassion for human suffering and for human sin which the Gospels affirm to have dwelt in the bosom of Jesus Christ. If, then, His saying be true, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," a similar compassion must reside in God, as it is impossible that Christ can be more compassionate than God; for He himself affirms, "I am in the Father and the Father in me," and, "the Father abiding in me doeth his works." Compassion, therefore, forms an essential feature in the character of God, and every

representation of God which is inconsistent with the existence of this compassion in Him, must be due either to the imperfection of human reason, or be the result of narrowness and want of moral appreciation.

Yet, notwithstanding the existence in God of a benevolence and a compassion, such as I have above described, it is a fact that not only do sin, and suffering as a consequence of sin, but suffering independent of sin, exist, and that in no small degree, in the world in which we live. It may be urged, then, if God is almighty, and as divinely compassionate as Christ is compassionate, why does He not annihilate all these evils? And if Christ was thus compassionate, why did He confine the exercise of His superhuman power within the limits which He did, and not cure all the evils from which men suffer which are not self-caused? The only possible answer to these questions is, that they are only a particular form of that great mystery, the existence of evil in the universe of One whose power and wisdom are unlimited and whose goodness is perfect; and that this is a problem the solution of which transcends the powers of the human intellect.

But it will, perhaps, be urged that our inability to solve this question invalidates all reasonings from the Divine character as to the condition of men after death. To this I answer, that while our view of the Divine government is far too limited to enable us to form a judgment respecting the results which flow from the permission of the existence of evil and of suffering during the present constitution of things, yet the principles on which God will judge mankind, and the condition to which the various classes of sinful or imperfect men will be consigned in consequence of that judgment, involve considerations which are purely moral; and therefore we are adequate judges whether the various theories which have been propounded on this subject are in conformity with the character of God, as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, and

whether that character does not afford firm grounds for the belief that for that large portion of mankind, who have been born and educated under the unfavourable conditions above referred to, and who have never had the opportunity of rejecting Jesus Christ during the present life, a period of probation under much more favourable conditions will be extended to them beyond the grave.

#### IV.—THE PATIENCE, FORBEARANCE, AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

To enable me to set these traits of our Lord's character vividly before the reader, it will be necessary that I should make a few citations from the Gospels. In St. John's Gospel the Jews are represented as applying to him two terms of the bitterest reproach :—

“Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil ?” A more opprobrious term than the first of these it was hardly possible for one Jew to apply to another. The second could not be otherwise than most offensive to one who declared that it was the end and purpose of His mission to destroy the works of the devil. The reproach conveyed by the two conjointly must have been of the keenest description. Let us hear His calm answer :—

“I have not a devil, but I honour my Father, and ye dishonour me. But I seek not mine own glory ; there is one that seeketh and judgeth.” (John viii. 49, 50.)

In a similar manner, when struck by one of the officers of the high priest, He calmly replies—

“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ?” (John xviii. 23.)

But the entire scene of the passion, as an example of patience and forbearance, cannot be better expressed than in the words of him who in an hour of weakness denied Him—

“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth

who when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. ii. 22, 23.)

St. Luke furnishes us with the following most remarkable account of our Lord's forbearance in the presence of religious intolerance :—

"And it came to pass that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face ; and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them ? And he turned and rebuked them. And they went to another village." (Luke ix. 51—56.)

I have quoted this passage as it stands in the Revised Version, not that I think that there can be any doubt as to the authenticity of the words which are placed in the margin, "even as Elijah did," or of our Lord's reply, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives [here again we have  $\psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\varsigma$ , souls], but to save them." Many reasons may be given why these words may have been omitted by a transcriber, but none why he should have gratuitously inserted them. To adopt the words of Mr. Mill, they contain a morality far too lofty for any Christian of the early ages to have invented ; may I not say the Christians of all ages, even of the present ?

This utterance of our Lord is preceded by one little less remarkable which is recorded by the same evangelist :—

"Master," says St. John, "we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not, for he that is not against you is for you." (Luke ix. 49, 50.)

This is an utterance which far transcends the level of the

ideas of the Christian sects of every age, including both what is called the Catholic Church and the various sects of the nineteenth century.

Let us now contemplate another aspect of this part of our Lord's character, observing that hardly anything is more provocative than extreme stupidity, especially when it has almost the appearance of being wilful.

"And the disciples came to the other side and forgot to take bread. And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, We took no bread." (Matt. xvi. 5—7.)

The stupidity manifested by the Apostles on this occasion seems almost incredible. On no point had our Lord more laboured throughout the entire course of His previous ministry than to impress on them the all-important truth of the worthlessness, in a moral point of view, of all distinctions between meats and drinks and the minutiae of ceremonial ordinances; and yet, though they were accustomed to parabolic teaching, the result produced on their minds by this utterance was, "See, he is warning us against bread which has been manufactured by Pharisees or Sadducees." Let us hear His mild reply:—

"How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

But I need not trouble the reader with further quotations as illustrations of this aspect of our Lord's character, for it is everywhere impressed on the narrative of the Gospels. The general impression produced by it cannot be better or more concisely expressed than in St. Matthew's application to it of an Old Testament prophecy—

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, until he send forth judgment unto victory."

## V.—THE STERNER ASPECTS OF OUR LORD'S CHARACTER.

Under this head are included the various occasions on which He denounced hypocrisy, sin wilfully persisted in when men's eyes are open to the evil of it, and the sin of those who deliberately throw temptations in the way of others. The sin of the hypocrite is that against which His most terrible denunciations are levelled.

The reader will readily remember numerous instances of our Lord's anger which are recorded in the Gospels. I shall, therefore, only draw attention to that terrible denunciation of religious hypocrisy which is recorded in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew. I need not repeat each denunciation. It will be sufficient to quote the concluding words.

“ Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna? Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah, the son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. xxiii. 32—38.)

Any commentary on this delineation of offended holiness, united as it is with the divinest sympathy, would only weaken its effect. I shall, therefore, leave it to speak for itself, with the single observation, that in this aspect of His character Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God.

What, then, is our general conclusion? The moral character of Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the Divine paternity, of the Divine benevolence, of the Divine compassion, of the Divine patience and gentleness. It is also the image of the Divine holiness when it comes into contact with sin wilfully persisted in, and, at the same time in blessed union with it, of that Divine compassion for sinners which exists in God, even when he carries out the laws of the moral world, by the action of which suffering is the inevitable result of sin—a compassion realised in our Lord's declaration, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him." (John iii. 16, 17.)

Such, then, being the moral character of God as it is revealed in the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ, we must now consider whether it does not afford a firm ground for believing that a probation will be extended to a large portion of mankind in the world beyond the grave. As I have proved in a previous chapter, the conditions under which mankind are born, and the surroundings in the midst of which they are educated, have a most important influence in determining the degree of their responsibility; and as these conditions greatly vary, the consequent variety of their responsibility must be carefully weighed in determining the question whether this present life is the one only scene of human probation. In considering this subject I observe—

I. It is an undeniable fact that an overwhelming majority of the human race have lived and died without having ever heard of Jesus Christ or His Gospel, and that the character in which they have died has been such as to unfit them to enter on the employments and the enjoyments of the saints in the perfected kingdom of Christ; nay, more, in innumer-

able multitudes it is the very opposite of that character. May not these justly plead with Him who will judge the world in righteousness, We have never rejected Thee or thy teaching, for we have never heard of Thee nor of thy gracious words ? Wilt not Thou, who hast declared if the men of Tyre and Sidon had been privileged to witness the mighty works Thou hast wrought elsewhere, that they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, afford us yet an opportunity of accepting the Gospel of Thy grace, of which we have never heard ? If, on the other hand, it be urged that the saying of the Apostle, "the times of this ignorance God overlooked," applies only to the past, I reply first, if God will overlook the ignorance of the heathen world before the coming of Christ, it proves the point which I am seeking to establish ; and, secondly, as the numbers of men who have since died without having ever heard of Christ or of the command to repent are in numbers numberless, they will receive the same merciful consideration. Witness the Chinese, witness the Hindoos, witness the inhabitants of Central Asia, witness the vast multitudes who have inhabited Africa. Not one in twenty thousand of these has ever heard the voice of the missionary. What, then, is to be their final doom ? They will have to come forth to judgment, for "All that are in the tombs," says Jesus Christ, "shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Is it to be to a resurrection of condemnation, the ultimate end of which will be either a never-ending existence in torment or else annihilation ? Surely the plea, We have never heard of Thee or of Thy salvation, will ascend up with acceptance before that Judge who is not only righteous but who has revealed the paternity of God, who is Himself the revelation of His benevolence, His compassion, His patience, and His forbearance, and will induce Him to afford them another opportunity of embracing Him and His salvation ; for He came not to save a mere fraction of

those countless multitudes which constitute the human race, but to save the world. But how can He be said to save the world, if the overwhelming majority of the human race are permitted by Him to perish, without having had vouchsafed to them the opportunity of even hearing of the Gospel of His grace?

It will doubtless be urged by some that God will pardon every sin which has been committed in ignorance, and therefore that the assumption that there will be a state of probation for this class of sinners is needless. To this I answer, that while I readily accept the first part of this proposition, the conclusion deduced from it by no means follows. The overwhelming majority of these die in an unholy state, utterly unfit to enter on the employments and the enjoyments of the heavenly world. In their characters is nothing high or elevated, but, on the contrary, much which is evil, low, and degraded. Look at the average Chinese, or Hindoo, or Negro, or native of Australia, or Patagonia, or the scalping Indian. Is it possible to imagine that characters such as these, if admitted into the company of the saints, would enjoy one moment of happiness or pleasure in such society, or would be capable of entering on any pursuit which is lofty and elevated? I fully admit that, as we are at present constituted, our bodily organism exercises a powerful influence on our spiritual and moral being, and when it is disorganised, this influence is a potent influence for evil. Of this proof is needless, for we each know it from our own experience. When, therefore, the spirit is separated from the bodily organism with which it is now united, the evil influences which it exerts—for example, those which arise from a disordered nervous system or a diseased brain—will cease, and a man may be far less possessed by the spirit of evil than he has appeared to be during life. Still there is such a thing as spiritual wickedness, which has an existence quite independent of the bodily organism;

and when the union between spirit and body is dissolved by death, it far from follows that those evil influences designated by St. Paul "the minding of the flesh," will not have impressed themselves on that spiritual and moral being which will survive the stroke of death and pass into the unseen world. One thing, however, is certain, that an overwhelming majority of those to whom we have referred die in a state very remote from holiness; many with fierce, sensual, and evil appetites strongly predominating in their characters, and all, in greater or less degree, devoid of those affections which are the fruit of the Spirit of God. If, then, God pardons every sin which they have committed, what will be the condition of those who die in a state of mind which renders them unfit to participate in the employments of the holy?

It will, perhaps, be urged that God will transform them from a state of unholiness into one of holiness by a supernatural exercise of His power. But that He will do so neither reason nor Scripture affords a hint. Even in those cases which are called sudden conversions not a little of the old man remains, which requires a course of painful discipline before it can be eradicated. Both Scripture and reason concur in affirming that the growth of holiness in man is a slow and gradual process. According to the affirmations of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, even Jesus Christ Himself learned obedience by the things which He suffered. What reason, then, have we for believing that this universal law of the spiritual world will be reversed, and this great change effected from sin to holiness, or from imperfect to perfect holiness, by a sudden transformation of those who die in a condition unfit for the society of the holy, by an exertion of Divine power which, in many cases, must almost amount to a new creation? To this there is an alternative. Our Lord assures us that in His Father's house there are many man-

sions. Why may not some of these be places where probation will be continued for such persons as those above referred to, under more favourable conditions than those which have been vouchsafed them here? Why may not some of these many mansions be places fitted for the growth in holiness of those who die in a state of spiritual and moral imperfection? St. Paul assures us that Christ's Messianic reign will continue until He has put all enemies under His feet, and that He will not resign the kingdom to the Father until all things have been subdued unto Him; and he elsewhere tells us that God has highly exalted Him, "that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth" (or as in the margin, things in the world below); "and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." What, then, I ask, is there in Scripture which implies that for the persons above referred to probation will not be continued during the whole period of Christ's Messianic reign? Do not the Divine attributes of justice, benevolence, and compassion, of which attributes, as they exist in God, Jesus Christ is the revelation, demand that some opportunity should be afforded them of embracing that Gospel of which they have not even heard while they continued here?

II. Equally certain is it that vast numbers of those who have lived and died in nominally Christian countries have never had any real opportunity of accepting or rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Not a few have been born and educated in an atmosphere of irreligion and of vice, into which an influence for good has rarely ever penetrated. Will the cry of such rise up in vain into the ears of that compassionate Judge who, in the days of His earthly life, bore in untiring patience with human infirmities, and even with sins which were not deliberate and wilful? It will, perhaps, be urged that all these have had opportunities of embracing the Gospel

if they had so chosen. To this I answer in the words of the Apostle, " How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ; or how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard ; or how shall they hear without a preacher ? " The only preacher they have heard has been that most uninviting type of Christianity displayed in the ordinary relations between man and man, which, while it may exclaim, " Lord ! Lord ! " leaves undone the things which He says—a Christianity more fitted to repel than to attract. Surely those who have been exposed to influences like these may justly put in a plea for mercy, may I not rather say, for a probation under more favourable conditions than those of their past lives, at the bar of that Judge who is both compassionate and just, and who urged as a reason for the forgiveness of His murderers that they knew not what they did.

III. But there is another class of persons, who have lived in nominally Christian countries—and that a very numerous one—who may justly put in a similar plea before the Judge who will certainly do right. I allude to those who have had set before them only imperfect versions of the gospel, and who have been told by those claiming to be the authorised teachers of the Church that this imperfect version of Christianity constitutes the essence of Christianity itself. I shall not attempt to enumerate these imperfect versions, or to describe in what their imperfections consist. I think that no reasonable man will dispute the fact that during the eighteen centuries of the past they have been numerous and have been various, and that large sections of the Church have propounded systems of theology as Christianity, beneath which, even if they are not different gospels from that proclaimed by our Lord, His teaching and His divinely attractive person have been hidden from the eyes of men. May not these justly put in the plea before Him who, during his earthly life, was moved with compassion for those whom He described

as sheep wandering without a shepherd : "We have not been guilty of rejecting thee, or thy gospel, but what was really a caricature of both. Often, instead of having had thy Father set before us as the God of mercies and the God of love, we have had Him depicted as possessing a character revolting to the conscience and the moral sense which He has implanted within us ; often, instead of having thee set before us in the Divine attractiveness of thy character, we have been told that thy gospel required us to believe, as necessary to salvation, a number of hard dogmas which we could not understand ; often, instead of its having been set before us that thy yoke is easy and thy burden light, have we been told that thy gospel imposed on men a number of ritual ordinances devoid of moral worth and difficult to be borne. Above all, we have found a terrible stumbling-block in those multitudes who have hailed thee as Lord but who have lived in habitual disregard of thy commandments, and in hearing one proclaimed as possessing all thy authority on earth whose character too often has been the very opposite of thine. Wilt not thou, O compassionate Jesus, take these things into thy consideration, and afford us yet an opportunity of knowing both thee and thy gospel, and thy Father whom thou hast revealed,—not as they have been set before us during our earthly probation, but as they really are ? " I cannot but think that such pleas as these will find acceptance with Him who came to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and who said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

IV. We must not confine our inquiry simply to the consideration whether a large portion of mankind, during this present life, have had the option of accepting or rejecting the gospel of Jesus Christ. The subject before us requires to be considered under other and very important aspects.

It is a truth which no observer of facts will deny, that

mankind bring into the world with them a nature far more inclined to evil than to good, and that the evil characters which have been formed by ancestors very frequently reappear as tendencies to the same kind of evil in their descendants, in a manner somewhat similar to that in which diseases of ancestors reappear in their bodies. These are facts which, whatever theory may be propounded in explanation of them, are beyond the possibility of dispute. Further, it is no less certain that an overwhelming majority of mankind have been born into an atmosphere of moral and spiritual degradation—one, it is true, of different degrees in different surroundings, but one which, in the case of numerous savage races, and even in some so-called civilised races of mankind, must be characterised as simply awful. I need not quote instances of them ; they will occur to every reader. In the midst of this state of moral and spiritual corruption the new-born child is born and educated. He has been inhaling it during his early years, long before the powers of his intellect have been sufficiently developed to enable him to exert an independent judgment between right and wrong, until it has become a portion of his spiritual and moral being. Thus it is that we see impressed on mankind the various distinctions of race, with their good and evil qualities which, unless some powerful external influence is brought to bear on them, propagate themselves from generation to generation. At the same time it is a fact that, in the course of the historical development of the great races of mankind, apart from some regenerating influence exerted on them from without, after they have reached a certain point in their development, the tendency of their better qualities has been to diminish and of their evil ones to increase. All these are hard facts which cannot be denied, account for them as we may.

Let us grapple face to face with some of the stern facts with which we are confronted. A child who is born with

tendencies to evil, and in the midst of a moral and spiritual atmosphere such as I have supposed, is certainly placed in a most unfavourable position for growing up into a holy man. Should I not rather say, that it is morally impossible that he should do so, unless some powerful influence is brought to bear upon him from without, and unless he can be removed from the influence of that corrupt moral and spiritual atmosphere in which his character has been formed. We need not go for examples of what I mean to countries into which no Christian influences have ever penetrated; nor need we summon as witnesses the fierce passions and the degraded practices of the savage races of mankind. We may find them in abundance in the very midst of the civilisation and of the professed Christianity of our own London. Who shall tell the number of those who are born of parents steeped in vice, and who have been brought up in their childhood and in their youth in the midst of nothing but vicious surroundings? May not all those who have been born under such influences as these to which I have referred, put in a plea before the judgment-seat of that Judge who is both perfect in justice, perfect in love, and perfect in compassion, that another probation be afforded them, free from the disadvantages of the past, and in which there will be influences for good capable of counterbalancing these disadvantages? Surely such may justly plead, "O, thou righteous Judge, though thou hast no spot of sin within thee, thou knowest from thy own experience what temptation means, for thou hast suffered, being tempted; wilt thou not have mercy upon us, and afford some fresh condition of probation to us, who not only have been born with sinful tendencies transmitted to us from our ancestors, but who have passed our childhood and youth in an atmosphere of moral and spiritual corruption into which scarcely an influence for good has ever penetrated?" I cannot think, with the Gospels in my hands, that such an appeal to

Jesus Christ would be made in vain, for He is not less merciful and compassionate now in His exalted condition than He was during His abode on earth.

V. One additional class of persons requires notice who will be able to put in a strong plea before Him who is not only a righteous Judge, but a merciful Saviour. I allude to that vast multitude of the human race the period of whose probation is cut short by death during childhood and early youth. The death tables inform us that of every million born in any particular year, more than three hundred thousand are removed from this earthly scene before they have attained to the age of fifteen—*i.e.* during that period of life in which, while reason, conscience, and the higher faculties of man are only imperfectly developed, the foundations of character are laid, and we are more capable of being impressed by our surroundings, whether they are good or evil, than during any subsequent period of our lives. Who will venture to affirm that in the case of an overwhelming majority of such who have existed in the ages of the past, their surroundings have not involved the inhaling of a moral and spiritual atmosphere far more interpenetrated with evil than with good? Respecting infants who die in the first year of their existence, though even they show signs of evil passions, I will say nothing; but it is a fact beyond the possibility of dispute, that no small amount of evil displays itself in those who die during the first fifteen years of life. All those who have had the charge of youth are only too painfully aware that various forms of evil character display themselves in early youth. Thus one displays an utter disregard for truth; in another the elements of conscience are imperfect; another is subject to violent passion; another is headstrong; another is constitutionally idle; another is mean; another, even at this early age, is the prey of the sensual passions. These forms of evil are most difficult to deal with under favour-

able circumstances. What, then, must they be when they are left unchecked to develop themselves in a congenial atmosphere? Of this last form of evil I have witnessed, when a boy, a case which I shall never forget. One morning when at school I sat next a precocious lad of about fourteen, during which he poured into my ears a mass of the foulest matter, with which I will not defile my pen. Four hours after, when larking with other boys, he fell from a great height and was taken up dead. What shall we say with respect to cases such as these? Will there be no extension of probation in the unseen world for those whose probation has been prematurely cut short in this? Will there be no opportunity afforded to such for repentance after they have passed away from this earthly scene? Will they, according to a system of theology which has attained a wide acceptance, be consigned to an existence in misery which will never end? Or, according to another, to a *limbo infantium*, i.e. to a mild kind of hell? Or will they, in accordance with another theory far less generally accepted, be simply annihilated?

To these questions it will not improbably be answered, God will pardon all sin which has been committed before the intellect, the conscience, and the moral sense have attained to their maturity. This I fully believe, but it does not remove the difficulty; for those to whom I have referred die in various states of unholiness, which must render them unfit for the society and the employments of the holy. If they are to be happy, their evil affections must be destroyed and pure and holy ones must be generated. It will probably be urged that this change will be suddenly effected by an exertion of God's almighty power. But the Scriptures uniformly teach that the mode in which the Divine Spirit acts in the sanctification of the unholy in the present kingdom of His grace is not by a sudden transformation of character, but

by a gradual growth in holiness. What reason have we for believing that it will be otherwise in the unseen world ? It is true that the putting off of the body may free us from those tendencies to evil which result from our union with it ; but what is requisite to qualify us for the employments and the enjoyments of the perfected kingdom of Christ is not the mere negation of evil, but the actual possession of affections which are elevated, pure, and holy ; or in other words, a state of mind and character fashioned after the image of Jesus Christ. There is another solution of this difficulty to which I have already alluded. In our Father's house are many mansions. Why may not some of these many mansions be furnished with the means fitted to enable those who die under the conditions above mentioned, to grow up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ?

It will probably be urged as an objection to the views maintained in this chapter that they involve the doctrine of purgatory. To this I answer, my position is that it is in conformity with the character of God, as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, to afford to those who have never heard of His gospel in this life, or only an imperfect version of it, an opportunity of accepting it hereafter ; and to those who in other respects have lived under unfavourable conditions of probation here, a probation under more favourable conditions in the unseen world ; and that He will not impute to any man as guilt anything of which that man is not the originator and cause, but, on the contrary, that such a man is the proper subject for the Divine compassion. I can, therefore, only say that if this position involves a doctrine of purgatory, be it so. But I would ask the reader to recollect that it is a doctrine of purgatory which differs *toto cælo* from that which is taught either in the systematic or the popular theology of the Roman, or any other section of

Christian Church ; and that it is not a purgatory which is penal, but one of amendment and of growth in holiness, and one in which the gospel of Jesus Christ will be set forth, not in the caricature which has been too often exhibited by sections of the Church, nor even in an imperfect version of it, but as it was proclaimed by Him who said that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Surely then He who came to give His life for the life of the world will provide some means hereafter of enabling those multitudes of men who, in numbers numberless, have never heard of the gospel of His grace, or only some imperfect version of it, to embrace it in the unseen world.

Of this opinion was St. Peter. The following are his affirmations which bear on this subject, to which I have already referred :—

“ Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit ; in which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison (*ἐν φυλακῇ*), which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah when the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved through water,” or as in the margin, were brought safely through water ; “ which also after a true likeness [margin, in the antetype] doth now save you, even baptism ; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter iii. 18—21.)

A few verses further on the Apostle adds—

“ Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them in the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you : who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For unto this end was the gospel [margin, the good tidings] preached even to the dead, that they might be

judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pet. iv. 4—6.)

I need hardly inform the reader that the number of refined criticisms to which these two passages have been subjected by those who hold that human probation terminates with the present life is extremely great. I shall not discuss them, but I shall take it for granted that the true meaning of the words is that which would suggest itself to any Greek-speaking member of the apostolic Churches who was free from the trammels imposed by systems of theology, and was a stranger to the discussions which have taken place on this subject, whether in ancient or modern times. The real question is not what the Apostle's language may be made to mean, but what is its natural meaning. It is worthy of remark that a writer on conditional immortality, who adopts the position that human probation terminates with the present life, takes the bold course of pronouncing the entire passage an interpolation, for no other reason than that he finds it impossible to reconcile either it or the subsequent affirmations about baptism with his system of theology.

What, then, is the first affirmation of the Apostle if we construe his language in its apparent natural meaning? I answer that our Lord, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, went and preached to the spirits in prison (*i.e.* to the antediluvians in Hades) who were aforetime disobedient, while God's long-suffering waited in the days of Noah. Against this apparently natural meaning of the words two interpretations have been proposed which require notice. Of these the first is that our Lord, prior to His incarnation, through the ministry of Noah and the preparation of the ark, preached to the spirits of the antediluvians who were in prison at the time of His death. If this, however, was the Apostle's intended meaning, I can only say that it is difficult to conceive how it is possible to express it in language which

is more obscure and unnatural. Equally difficult is it to understand what purpose the writer had in view in making such an affirmation.

The second is that Jesus Christ, while put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, actually preached to the spirits of the antediluvians in Hades, but that His preaching was not an announcement of good news to those whose probation had been one which had been attended with unfavourable conditions while on earth, as must have been the case with multitudes of the antediluvians who perished in the flood, but that it was an announcement of liberation from prison to one class, and of judgment to another, through the accomplishment of His atoning work.

It seems to me that nothing more is required to expose the unsoundness of these two positions than to set them forth distinctly and place them side by side with the words of the Apostle, and to let the reader judge. This also will be the best course to adopt to enable him to form a judgment of the value of numerous other criticisms of this passage.

The second passage above quoted stands in the closest connection with the first, being separated from it only by a few verses, and therefore it can hardly be understood as referring to anything else than the preaching just referred to. What meaning, then, did the Apostle intend to convey by the words, "Who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead; for unto this end was the good tidings (the gospel) preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit"?

Here, then, in the course of fifteen words the Apostle twice uses the words "the dead." In the first instance the words "the dead" unquestionably mean the dead in the ordinary sense of those words, because in the very same sentence they are used as the opposite of the living: "who is ready," says

he, "to judge the quick and the dead." Is it possible, I ask, that when he writes in the words immediately following, "For unto this end was the gospel," *i.e.* the good tidings, "preached even to the dead," that he could have intended his reader to attach a wholly different meaning to the words "the dead," viz. the spiritually dead while on earth? Such modes of interpretation may make Scripture mean anything or nothing.

If we are content to understand language in its ordinary sense, the Apostle's meaning is not wanting in distinctness. The gospel was preached to the antediluvians in order "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." That is, they suffered as other men suffer in the ordinary course of providence in one overwhelming calamity, without any distinction having been made between different degrees of individual responsibility, just in the same manner as when a vast multitude of men are destroyed by an earthquake, a volcano, or the sinking of a ship at sea. Thus the antediluvians were judged according to men in the flesh, *i.e.* without any distinction being made between degrees of guilt, and in the state in which they died they passed into Hades; but the gospel was preached to them there that they might be quickened according to God in the spirit, *i.e.* that the means of recovery and salvation might be again put within their reach.

It will, perhaps, be objected that these utterances of St. Peter were made with respect to the antediluvians only, and that when he wrote the passage in question, for anything that appears to the contrary, these, and none but these, came within the Apostle's view. This I fully admit, and it is difficult to assign the reason why these alone are referred to. But this does not alter the fact that it was the belief of St. Peter that our Lord did preach glad tidings to the spirits of the antediluvians who were confined in Hades during the

interval which occurred between His expiring on the cross and the morning of His resurrection. One reason why these alone are referred to has a certain degree of probability, but that is all. The catastrophe of the flood was not only well known to those to whom the Apostle wrote, but it formed the most terrible judgment which is recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and one in which it was obvious that no distinction was made between different degrees of responsibility; for in it the grey-haired sinner and the youth just entering on his responsibility perished alike. Full well, then, might the question have occurred to the Apostle, or to those to whom he wrote: as all the antediluvians suffered a common judgment in the flood, will they all suffer a common judgment in the unseen world, however they may have differed in their different degrees of guilt; and will they have no opportunity of embracing that message of good news to men, of which they never heard? If this were so, the Apostle's answer is, Jesus Christ, between His death and His resurrection, proclaimed glad tidings to the spirits of the antediluvians in Hades.

But this reference to these alone does not hinder us from drawing an inference from the fact affirmed by the Apostle. No passage from the Pentateuch can be quoted which directly affirms that man will survive the death of the body; yet our Lord tells the Sadducees that they might have justly inferred this great truth from the Divine declaration, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In the same manner, we are justified in inferring from the fact that our Lord proclaimed glad tidings to the spirits of the antediluvians in Hades, that some opportunity of embracing His gospel will be afforded to those innumerable multitudes of mankind, whose earthly probation has been passed under equally unfavourable conditions—a conclusion to which the attributes of God, as they are revealed in Jesus Christ, evi-

dently point, and which is suggested by the concluding words of St. Paul's address to the philosophers at Athens—" *The times of this ignorance God overlooked*, but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness"—and by his affirmation that a time is coming in the future when in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld, and confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father; and that God will then become all in all. In what righteousness, I ask, does the Apostle affirm that God will judge the world? Will it be a righteousness which the conscience and moral sense He has implanted in man affirm to be righteousness, or will it be in conformity with attributes of a wholly different character, to which the name of righteousness has been given, but which differs widely from our human conception of it? Let the reader judge.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE VALIDITY OF THE THEORIES OF UNIVERSALISM, AND OF CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY.

THESE two theories have been propounded by two different schools of thoughtful men, who have felt themselves unable to reconcile the commonly accepted doctrines of retribution with the character of God, as it is affirmed by reason, with the revelation of that character in the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ, and with the general teaching of the Scriptures of the New Testament. It will, therefore, be desirable, before concluding this argument, to give them a brief consideration.

The first of these theories lays down that the victory of good over evil will ultimately result in the recovery of every moral being in the universe to holiness and to God, and that the end and purpose of the Incarnation was to effect this. Its fundamental principles may be stated as follows:—

1. The vast extent of the universe, its complicated structure, and its adaptations in numbers numberless prove that it is the work of a being to whose wisdom and power it is impossible to assign any limitations conceivable by man, and that therefore there is no possible obstacle which can hinder Him from effectuating the purposes of His will, whatever that will may be.

2. That, notwithstanding the clouds and darkness with which portions of the Divine government of the universe are

enshrouded, the Christian revelation assures us that God is perfectly holy, benevolent, just, and good, and that the essence of His moral character is love. This being so, it is urged that it follows, as a necessary consequence, that His will must be the ultimate happiness of those moral beings whom He has created, yet that this will cannot attain its perfect realisation so long as evil continues to exist.

3. Yet, while it is a great truth that God is unlimited in power and wisdom, perfect in holiness and benevolence, it is a fact which is beyond the possibility of question that a large amount of moral evil—who shall say how large?—has, for purposes inscrutable to man, been permitted to enter the universe of the Creator; and this evil is not a mere passing shadow, but a terrible reality, which in beings gifted with immortality, unless uprooted, will work out results awful to contemplate, during the æons of the future; *i.e.* the existence of moral evil, with all the fearful consequences which accompany it, will be perpetuated for ever in the universe of Him who is all holy, all benevolent, and at the same time almighty and all wise, and which universe has been brought into existence by His sovereign pleasure.

4. Inasmuch as the essence of moral evil consists in the existence of a will opposed to holiness and to God, if evil beings will continue to exist for ever, however much they may be restrained in their activities or however terrible may be their torments, wills animated with hatred and opposition to God will continue to exist for ever. If this be so, it follows that the reign of evil will be everlasting over portions of God's created work, and consequently that the affirmation of St. Paul that it is “his good pleasure unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times to sum up all things in Christ,” and to become “all in all,” will never be accomplished, as it is impossible that God can be all in all so long as a will continues to exist in opposition and unsubdued to Him.

5. Assuming these principles to be true, the Universalist argues that it is incredible that God has so constituted the moral universe that moral evil, which is the opposite to His holiness, and suffering, which is the opposite to His benevolence, should continue to exist for ever in the universe of which He is the sovereign Lord ; and therefore he infers that He will adopt some means—and who shall assign a limit to His resources ?—of rescuing the moral beings whom He has created and endowed with immortality from the perpetual dominion of evil, and of bringing them into voluntary union with Himself.

6. The Universalist also alleges that the general affirmations of the New Testament respecting the end and purpose of redemption, and not a few of its express declarations, all point in the same direction. Of these the following are the most striking :—

(1.) “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” (John i. 29.)

(2.) “And we have beheld, and bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (1 John iv. 14.)

(3.) “For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him.” (John iii. 17.)

(4.) “The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.” (John vi. 51.)

(5.) “And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” (1 John ii. 2.)

(6.) “He died for all.” (2 Cor. v. 15.)

(7.) “For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.” (1 Tim. iv. 10, 11.)

(8.) “For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation unto all men.” (Titus ii. 11.)

(9.) "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost." (Luke xix. 10.)

(10.) "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men unto me." (John xii. 32.)

(11.) "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him (*i.e.* Christ) should all the fulness dwell ; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross ; through him, I say, whether they be things on the earth or things in the heavens." (Col. i. 19, 20.)

(12.) "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in him (*i.e.* Christ) unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth, in him." (Eph. i. 9, 10.)

(13.) "Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him, and given him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth (*i.e.* the underworld), that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 9—11.)

(14.) "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us ; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled unto God." (2 Cor. v. 19, 20.)

(15.) "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who willeth (*θέλει*) that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.)

(16.) "For if by the trespass of the one *the many* died, much more shall the grace of God, and the gift by the grace

of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many.” (Rom. v. 15.)

(17.) “So then, as through *one trespass*, the judgment came upon all men unto condemnation, even so, through *one act of righteousness*, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as through the *one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so, through the obedience of the one, shall the many be made righteous.*” (Rom. v. 18, 19.)

(18.) “And when all things have been subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected unto him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Cor. xv. 28.)

(19.) “Every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth [i.e. the underworld], and in the sea and all that is in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, unto the ages of ages.” (Rev. v. 13.)

These are the most important passages in the New Testament on which the Universalist bases his theory. Of these he alleges that the first eight distinctly affirm that the end and purpose sought to be effected by our Lord’s divine mission was the salvation of the world; that, in the ninth, He himself declares that He came to seek and to save the lost; in the tenth, that He will effect this by drawing all men unto himself; in the five following, that the final reconciliation of all things to God is the purpose sought to be realised by the incarnation, and that it is the will of God that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; in the sixteenth and seventeenth, that the work of Jesus Christ has not only in every respect remedied the evil brought on mankind by Adam’s transgression, but that it has been far more efficacious for good than his transgression for evil; and in the eighteenth and nineteenth, that

a time will come in the future when the reconciliation of all things to God will be finally accomplished, and that God will then be all in all.

Such, without entering into minute details, minor considerations, and the great question of free agency, involving as it does some complicated metaphysical problems, are the great principles on which this theory rests, and such are the chief passages in the New Testament which are quoted in its support. Most of the latter have been discussed in previous chapters. It is, therefore, not my intention in this place to point out where I consider them incapable of bearing the weight of the hypothesis which has been erected on them. The reader will observe, from the positions laid down in this work, that while I consider the hypothesis to be an approximation to the truth, yet I cannot accept it as the entire truth. I say "an approximation to the truth," because I think that it is the teaching alike of reason and revelation, that as long as there is any good in a man he will continue to be the subject of God's merciful regard, and, through the work of redemption which has been effected by Jesus Christ, capable of recovery to holiness and to God; and that those only are irrecoverable in whom the reign of evil is become absolute and complete. Respecting such, the habitual language used by our Lord and his Apostles seems to be decisive. I need not repeat the language in which they express the fate of the finally impenitent. The words which they use to express this can only have the natural meaning which they bore in the Greek spoken in the primitive Christian societies, and of which the English word "destruction," and others of kindred meaning, are sufficiently accurate representations. The Universalist endeavours to evade this by affirming that when the Scriptures threaten the finally impenitent with destruction, or some kindred term, the thing intended is the destruction of the sin, but

the recovery of the sinner. I have already observed that the principle of interpretation which assigns to the term destruction, and to similar expressions, the meaning of never-ending existence in never-ending torment, is to attribute to them a wholly non-natural signification. I therefore cannot think the mode of interpretation of these terms which is adopted by the Universalist to be less non-natural than that which assigns to them the above meaning. Surely it is a mode of dealing with language which no one would adopt, unless compelled by the exigencies of a theory.

It is a blessed truth, affirmed by the Christian revelation, that there is a time coming in the future when God will have reconciled all things unto himself; and when evil will cease to exist in the universe which He has created. There are only two ways in which this can be effected—either by the conversion of evil beings, or by causing them to cease to exist. The Universalist affirms that it is in accordance with the Divine character that the mode in which this will be effected will be by their ultimate conversion. This the language of the New Testament, taken in its obvious meaning, denies. It remains, therefore, that the second alternative is the only possible one; that evil beings will be annihilated, either by an exertion of God's almighty power, or because He has so constituted the moral universe that, under His providential government, the disease of evil will ultimately destroy man's spiritual and moral being, just as incurable physical disease destroys his bodily life.

#### THE THEORY OF CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY, OR LIFE IN CHRIST.

This subject has been treated by numerous writers, who while agreeing in fundamental principles, have set it forth under various modifications according to their own different points of view. If I were to enter into a complete criticism

of this theory and its modifications, a volume of considerable size would not be too large to devote to its consideration. In endeavouring to set before the reader its general positions, and the grounds on which this theory rests, it will be necessary that I should confine myself to the work of one who may be considered its most powerful advocate. None will, I think, hesitate to assign this place to the work of the Rev. Edward White, entitled "Life in Christ." The title of the work is a sufficiently clear indication of the positions which the author seeks to establish. These are two, viz. that man's survival after death is not due to any natural immortality which he possesses, but is the gift of God through the Incarnation; and that the commonly accepted doctrines of systematic and popular theology, which affirm that the penalty of sin will be an existence in never-ending torments, and that this will be the fate of an overwhelming majority of the human race, is destitute of support both in reason and in Scripture. The second of these is argued with a force which leaves little to be desired; but the general theory itself, and the reasons adduced in proof of it, owing to the wide extent of the subject matter which, with the view of strengthening his argument, the author has introduced into the controversy, render it extremely difficult to express his views in a number of distinct propositions, the work itself consisting of not less than 538 closely-printed pages. The following, however, will give the reader a general idea of his chief positions:—

1. The theory of man's natural immortality is a heathen fiction, destitute alike of any foundation in reason or in Scripture. On the contrary, man was, like the other animal races, created mortal (but capable of becoming immortal), and in his present state, apart from the Incarnation, death would have been the termination of his existence, as it is of theirs. This position is founded on the account of the creation and

fall of man, as given in the second and third chapters of Genesis, and on various considerations derived from the alleged discoveries of modern science.

2. But while man was created mortal, he differed from the other animal races, in that he was created capable of becoming immortal by eating of the fruit of the tree of life. On this are based several theories which it will be unnecessary to particularise.

3. The penalty denounced against the violation of the Divine command, forbidding Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was death, *i.e.* the loss of existence, *on the very day of his transgression*, and if this penalty had been executed according to the strict terms of the threatening, the human race could not have come into existence.

4. In consequence of the Divine purpose to introduce a dispensation of mercy through the Incarnation the threatening was not executed.

5. Even under the economy of redemption, death destroys man as man; *i.e.* it destroys his animal life and his bodily organism; and apart from these, neither the personality, nor the spirit, nor the soul, constitute the man. In a word, according to this theory, man, as man, ceases to exist at death, and is dissolved into his component parts, neither of which, when separate from the others, nor all, when separated from the bodily organism and the animal life, constitute the man, who can only be restored to the fulness of his being by a resurrection. So completely does the author carry out this theory, that he even goes the length of affirming that death destroyed Christ as man. This position is rendered necessary by the theory which he propounds respecting the nature of the atonement, and of the penalty attached to the violation of the law of God, and several other considerations which form a portion of his general theory of life in Christ. I need

hardly observe that these positions rest on inferences and metaphysical problems of a very doubtful and complicated character.

6. Adam, by his transgression and consequent expulsion from paradise, being excluded from eating of the fruit of the tree of life, both he and his posterity remained in the original condition of mortality in which they were created.

7. For the purpose of introducing a dispensation of mercy, the penalty of instant death denounced against the violation of the Divine command was not executed on Adam; but on the contrary, he was respite, and continued to live several hundred years afterwards; and thus the human race, which would have perished in him if the threatened penalty had been executed, was brought into existence; but under the disadvantageous condition that through the transgression of their first progenitor sin entered into the world, death by sin, and thus death passed upon all men. This last result, if I understand the theory rightly, would have been the natural consequence of Adam and his posterity being excluded from access to the tree of life; and the death which would thus have passed upon all men, had it not been for the dispensation of mercy to be brought about by means of the Incarnation, would have been extinction of being, which would have rendered punishment beyond the grave for sins committed here impossible.

8. The present existence of the human race, the survival of the personality in Hades, and the future resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, are due to the same cause.

9. Saints who have become united to Christ in this life, instead of passing into Hades, will after death enjoy a happy existence in the presence of Christ; but their felicity will not be complete until after the resurrection, when the entire man will be once more reconstituted.

10. At the judgment vast numbers who have never heard of Jesus Christ or the Gospel of His mercy, but who have lived up to the light which was in them, and who have exhibited the spirit of love, will be reckoned by Christ among the righteous, and be invited by Him to enter into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

11. Another result of the incarnation will be the resurrection of the wicked for judgment. I use the words "another result of the incarnation," because according to the original theory, if the penalty incurred by Adam had been strictly executed—and its non-execution was due to the Divine purpose of mercy in the incarnation—the entire human race would have perished in him; and consequently their present existence and the survival of their personality in Hades, and their future resurrection are the result of the Divine purpose in redemption.

12. After the judgment sinners will be punished according to the strictest principles of justice in exact proportion to their deeds; but their sufferings will not be of an unlimited but of a limited duration, and will terminate in the extinction of their being, and thus evil will be finally extinguished in the universe of God.

13. Both reason and Scripture afford grounds for believing that those who have had no opportunity afforded them of embracing the gospel here—and these compose the overwhelming majority of mankind who have lived in the past, and who are living in the present—will have an opportunity afforded them of doing so in Hades.

I have used the words "in the past and in the present," because there are not wanting writers who, to escape from the difficulties involved in the popular theories of retribution—which affirm that the saved will constitute a small minority, and the lost the overwhelming majority of the

human race—suggest that those who will be born during the Millennium will redress the balance, if they do not make the number of the saved greatly to preponderate. I repeat it, the real question is not whether in the ultimate issue of things the saved or the lost will constitute the majority of mankind, but whether it is consistent with the character of One whose wisdom and power are unlimited, and the essence of whose moral being is love, to have so constituted the moral universe that the ultimate result will be not only that moral evil, which is the opposite to His holiness, will continue to exist in it for ever, but that those multitudes who, according to popular belief, will constitute the lost, are destined to pass a never-ending existence in never-ending torment.

Such are the most important positions of this theory, as far as they bear on the immediate subject of the present work. I have discussed most of them either directly or indirectly in the preceding pages, and from them the reader will be able to determine how far I assent to or dissent from the reasonings in question. While agreeing with the main position which it is the object of the work to establish, viz. that the theory of retribution so widely accepted, both in systematic and popular theology, has no basis to rest upon either in reason or revelation, I cannot but think that many of the principles on which no inconsiderable portion of the argument is founded are open to very serious objections; and that this, on the principle that the strength of a chain is that of its weakest link, greatly weakens the force of those points in Mr. White's reasonings which are extremely powerful. One thing can hardly fail to strike the reader of this work,—the inconsiderable use which is made in it of the moral argument. A few additional remarks only will be necessary.

With respect to the first of the above positions, the reader should observe that, according to the author's theory,

man was created mortal, just as the other animals were created mortal ; that is to say, according to the original law of his being, death would have been the annihilation of his personal conscious existence, as it is the annihilation of that, be it what it may, which constitutes their individuality. This theory is, however, so far modified as to make it of little value for the purpose for which it is propounded ; for it is admitted that although man was created mortal, he was also created capable of becoming immortal by eating of the fruit of the tree of life. This being so, there must have been an essential difference in the constitution of man and animals with respect to their powers of surviving the stroke of death ; for while man was created capable of becoming immortal by eating of the fruit of the tree of life, it is not urged that the same result would have been produced on animals if they had partaken of this fruit. On the contrary, the whole theory is founded on the assumption that animals and man in the natural course of things would be utterly destroyed at death. Into the thorny question whether animal life—be the vital principle what it may—is annihilated by death I shall not enter.

A considerable body of scientific opinion—it would be incorrect to call it evidence, for the entire question lies outside the range of scientific investigation—in favour of the theory that man perishes at death, is adduced by the author in the four opening chapters of the work. I fully admit that evidence of his survival which is strictly scientific there is none. But, in accepting this as a fact, the reader should keep in mind, what is too often forgotten in controversies connected with this subject, that the kind of evidence designated “scientific” is very far from being the only kind of evidence which is absolutely conclusive ; that in the practical affairs of life the evidence, though in numerous cases it leaves on our minds the highest degree of certainty,

is of a very different character from that which is so designated,\* and that the opinions of scientists, when they travel beyond the special subjects of their investigations, are of no more value than those of other thoughtful men. Further, it should never be forgotten, that while no scientific evidence exists that man will survive the death of the body, on the other hand it is equally true that no such evidence exists that the death of the body will be the destruction of the personality. As I have said in a former chapter, all that science has succeeded in proving is that in man, as he is at present constituted, mind and brain are most intimately correlated to one another. But for the theory that the destruction of the brain is the destruction of the conscious personality, or that the personality is incapable of existing, acting, thinking, and perceiving under conditions different from the present ones, anything approaching to scientific evidence is entirely wanting.

It is true that Mr. White is careful to inform his readers that he does not accept the scientific evidence, to which he refers, as indubitably true, and that he is fully aware that much may be said on the other side of the question. Still, it is clear that he considers it to afford considerable support to his general position. If this were not so, why adduce it; for if it is inconclusive, as it certainly is, the effect of such reasonings is not to strengthen an argument but to weaken it. It is also unfortunate that the theories referred to have been extensively propounded by Atheists, Agnostics, Positivists, and Pantheists as alternatives to Christian theism. Mr. White, however, in his preface to the third edition of his work, admits, in the following singular passage, that the body of scientific opinion put forth in chapters I.,

\* Of this kind of evidence, that which in criminal cases brings to the mind of a jury the fullest conviction of indubitable certainty is a striking example.

II., III., and IV. adds little to the weight of his general argument. He thus writes:—

“If the reader who cares little for scientific opinion finds the opening sections not to his taste, he can commence the perusal of this book at the fifth chapter without serious hindrance to the understanding of the general argument.”

Is this most serious question, then, to be resolved into one of taste? To what purpose is it to adduce a number of scientific theories in support of the argument that man, according to his original constitution, perishes with the death of the body, when they are unproved theories and nothing more, and then tell the reader that if the chapters which contain them are not to his taste it is unnecessary to peruse them? The only result of inserting them is to embarrass the argument with so much questionable and, on the author's own admission, unnecessary matter.

The theory that man, as he was originally formed, was created mortal, and was so conditioned that death would have been his annihilation as a conscious being, yet that he might not only have continued to live for evermore, but also have been elevated to a higher order of existence by eating of the fruit of the tree of life, is only consistent with the assumption that mind and matter are identical. It is conceivable that the eating of a fruit might have the effect of counteracting the natural tendency of the body to decay; but what influence it could have exerted on man's intellectual, moral, and spiritual being it is difficult to imagine, except on the unproved assumption that he is nothing but organised matter endowed with life. Whether the second and third chapters of Genesis furnish data sufficient to support the weight of this theory I have considered in a former chapter, to which I must refer the reader.\* It will, therefore, be only necessary to observe that on points such as these the obscurity of the

\* See Chapter VII.

narrative affords ample scope for the exercise of the theological imagination, of which theorists of all kinds have made the most ample use. Those who maintain that moral and spiritual results can be wrought in man by eating of the fruit of a tree should abstain from casting stones at those who hold that spiritual regeneration is effected in baptism, or that spiritual life is sustained by eating of the consecrated bread and drinking of the cup of the Holy Communion. We hold that moral and spiritual effects must be wrought by moral and spiritual influences, and that our Lord's affirmation, "Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth a man" is not less true in a slightly altered form, "Not that which entereth into the mouth can make him more holy."

The propositions numbered three and four I have for all practical purposes considered above; but the fifth proposition, that even under the economy of redemption death destroys man as man, and that portions of his complex being survive in Hades, involves a number of very complicated and metaphysical theories respecting the ontology of man, into the realities of which it is impossible, with our present faculties, to penetrate. Consequently it forms a very insecure foundation on which to erect any theory respecting future retribution or the condition of man after death. Mr. White, however, boldly presses this theory to its extreme logical consequences, and argues from it and from certain theories respecting the atonement, and from the death which was threatened by the law as the penalty of transgression, that our Lord when He expired on the cross ceased to exist as man. Most Christians will, I think, draw the conclusion that if this is a necessary inference from these premisses, they must contain in them principles which are essentially unsound, and that, as far as scriptural authority goes, they must be based on misapprehensions of the teaching of the sacred writers, or on inaccurate deductions from it. Full well may it be asked, If Christ,

when He expired on the cross, ceased to exist as man, was the incarnation suspended between His death and resurrection, or did His assumption of a body at His resurrection involve a second incarnation? The reader will, I think, be of opinion that theories of this kind involve us in questions which transcend the limits of our finite understandings, and respecting which certainty is unattainable. The only effect, therefore, of introducing them into this argument is to weaken it, instead of yielding it an additional support.

With respect to propositions six, seven, and eight, it is far from being so clear as Mr. White supposes, that the not carrying into execution of the penalty of death—*i.e.* annihilation—with which Adam was threatened on the day of his transgression, was an act of mercy to the human race. At any rate, as I have observed above, the contrary view is quite maintainable. For if, in conformity with the theory, Adam had ceased to exist, mankind, and all the evils which, according to popular theology, have resulted from the Fall, would have been non-existent, and another Adam might have been created to bring the human race into existence under more favourable conditions. Further, the position that the continued existence of fragments of the disintegrated man in Hades—there awaiting judgment for the deeds done in the body until the entire man has been reconstituted at the resurrection—is solely due to the incarnation, to say the least of it, rests on data of a most questionable character, and is therefore a very insecure one to form any portion of the foundation on which to erect a theory of retribution. It is true that in speaking of the Fall Mr. White chiefly dwells on the fact that death has passed upon all men as one of the results of Adam's transgression, and that death is now not penal but natural; but as he has laid down that man was originally created mortal, all that can be meant by the words "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,"

is, that death became his inevitable doom owing to his exclusion from eating of the fruit of the tree of life, by doing which, as he was originally constituted, his "mortal" would have put on immortality; and he has little to say as to how far that vast amount of moral evil which unquestionably exists is one of its results.

Still the terrible consequences of transmitted evil which popular theology attributes to the Fall are not a theory, but a fact, and this fact must not be excluded from the discussion of the position under consideration. For Mr. White lays down that the non-execution of the penalty of death denounced against Adam on the day of his transgression, the prolongation of his life, by means of which the existence of the human race in its present condition was made possible, and the survival of man's personality in Hades for the purpose of judgment and retribution, are due to the Divine purpose of mercy, to be subsequently realised in the incarnation; and that, apart from this purpose, death would have been the extinction of his being, and consequently, as far as the present human race is concerned, both physical suffering, and moral evil, with all the terrible consequences thence resulting, both here and hereafter, would have been non-existent. Positions like these, to make them available for the purpose for which they are here propounded, must be established by the strongest proof. In a word, they ought to be founded on direct affirmations of Scripture, and not on a number of very questionable inferences and reasonings, respecting the validity of which ordinary people are inadequate judges.

With propositions nine and ten I cordially concur; but with respect to eleven, which lays down that the resurrection of the wicked for the purpose of judgment and punishment is the result of the Divine purpose of mercy in the incarnation, and that but for it death would have been the extinction of their being, it seems to me that nothing but

the exigencies of a particular theory could have induced Mr. White to have propounded so questionable a proposition.

While I fully concur with the general principles which are involved in propositions twelve and thirteen, I cannot but think that the theory which is propounded in number five, that *man, as man*, perishes at death, and that only a portion of him, though a very important one, continues to exist in Hades, seriously interferes with the idea that those who have had no opportunity of embracing the Gospel here will have the opportunity afforded them of embracing it in the underworld. How, I ask, can this be possible if *man, as man*, no longer exists after death? In that case it would not be the man, but only a portion of him, which would be capable of being evangelised in Hades. Mr. White elsewhere lays it down as necessary to man's full responsibility for his actions during his earthly life, that his complete manhood should be reconstituted by the re-union of the body with that portion of him which survives death (by whatever name we choose to designate it, be it personality, spirit, or soul), in order that the former, having been a sharer with the personality in its actions during life, may also be a sharer in the consequences which will result from those actions in the unseen world; for, according to the theory, the personality when separated from the body does not constitute the man, but only a portion of him.

I have drawn attention to these points for the purpose of showing with what unnecessary difficulties theories such as the above encumber the subject under consideration. It is right, however, to observe that the reason why a great deal of questionable matter has been introduced into this controversy is, that it is the object of the theory designated "Conditional Immortality," or "Life in Christ," to establish two positions which are wholly distinct from one another. The first of these is—

That the endless life of the righteous will not be the result

of any natural immortality inherent in man, but that it is a free gift of God imparted through the incarnation, and is due to a creative act of God, designated regeneration, and is the consequence of the regenerate man abiding in Christ and Christ in him.

The second—

That the punishment of the wicked in the world to come will not be of endless duration.

The proof of this first position is supposed to afford additional strength to the second. It seems to me, on the contrary, greatly to weaken it, by introducing into the controversy a wide range of subjects the evidence of which is of a very complicated and doubtful character.

For the purpose of enabling the reader to form a judgment as to the highly complicated nature of portions of the argument, I cannot do better than quote the titles which Mr. White has affixed to nine chapters, occupying nearly one-third of the entire work. They are as follows :—

1. The Serpent in Genesis : an Excursus on the Scripture doctrine of an Evil Superhuman Agency concerned in the Destruction of Mankind.
2. The Death Penalty of the Mosaic Law.
3. The Opposed Doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees in relation to a Future Life, and Christ's Rejection of both.
4. The incarnation of the Life, or the Logos made flesh, that man might live eternally.
5. Justification of Life.
6. The New Covenant of Life in the Blood of Christ ; or the Nature of the Death of Christ, and its place in the Divine Government as an Atonement for Sin.
7. Regeneration unto Life, through Union with the Incarnate Word, by the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life.
8. Hades, or the State of Man between Death and the Resurrection, under the Economy of Redemption.

9. The Resurrection to Life Eternal at the Coming and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I need hardly observe that the discussion of these positions involves us in questions in the highest degree difficult of solution, and respecting which eminent Christian writers, the sincerity of whose search after truth it is impossible to question, have taken, and still continue to take, very divergent views. But inasmuch as the titles of these chapters give the reader only a faint idea of the amount of abstract matter which is thus introduced into this controversy, and of the consequent uncertainty of the basis which it affords for the erection on it of a theory of retribution, I will name some of the subjects discussed in them in the author's own words. Thus—

1. In the chapter entitled "The Incarnation of the Life ; or the Logos made Flesh that Man may live eternally," the following subjects are discussed :—

Christ's deity the crux of the Gospels ; object of John to deify Christ ; John's doctrine of the Logos ; triple personality of Christ ; eternal life by the incarnation ; eclipse of faith by mysticism ; genius of Oriental thought ; definiteness of the Greek language ; the Book of Genesis the key to Scripture ; the Rabbinical doctrine of a judgment to come.

2. In the chapter entitled "Justification of Life" the following subjects are brought under discussion :—

Forensic justification ; fourfold justification ; patristic justification ; three errors in justification ; justification and immortal life ; influence of psychology on the doctrine of justification.

3. In the next chapter we are involved in the discussion of the following profound and abstract questions :—

The nature of the death of Christ ; the curse borne by Christ ; the meaning of salvation by blood ; the atonement of Christ ; the propitiatory sacrifice ; causes of Unitarian doctrine ; an excursus on the sensibility of God.

Surely the investigation of this last subject is an attempt to intrude into things which transcend the powers of the finite intellect of man.

Not to weary the reader's patience, I will only trouble him with an enumeration of some of the subjects treated in the chapter entitled "Regeneration unto Life:—"

Apostolic doctrine of the new birth ; spiritual regeneration in baptism ; Nonconformist ideas on baptism ; apostolic doctrine on baptism ; patristic ideas on baptism ; influence of the patristic doctrine ; regeneration through the Word ; regeneration through fragmentary truth ; body, soul, and spirit ; the creation of the *Pneuma* ; complex origin of lives ; signs of regenerate life ; physical and spiritual germ life, &c., &c.

It is hardly necessary to observe that most of these subjects, thus unnecessarily introduced into this controversy, form some of the most difficult problems of theology. Not a few of them are theories representing the view of the doctrine of the atonement and of the regeneration of man which is held by that section of the Church usually designated evangelical. Others involve questions going to the utmost limits of human thought, and some which transcend its limits altogether. On their discussion whole libraries have been written ; and yet men, equally able, learned, pious, and earnest seekers after truth in all ages of the Church, have arrived at widely different conclusions from precisely the same data. What, then, is the inference which may justly be drawn from this diversity of opinion among such men as the above by those who come to the study of these subjects unbiassed by system and free from the trammels which it imposes ? Surely, that the data on which such theories have been erected must be of a very uncertain character, and therefore that they can form no essential portion of Christianity. What, then, are they ? Even if we rate them at the highest, they are not affirmations of revealed truth, but deductions of human

reason from certain principles supposed to be contained in it; and as such they are subject to all the uncertainties arising from the errors to which the logical intellect is liable when it attempts to grapple with abstract questions, not a few of which involve us in the discussion of subjects transcending its grasp. Respecting these and all similar questions the words of Job are true, "Therefore have I uttered things that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, that I knew not."

If, then, to proclaim glad tidings to the poor is one of the great characteristics of Christianity which distinguish it from every religion of the past or of the present; if, as our Lord affirmed, He was anointed with the Spirit of God for this very purpose; if He came not to call the righteous but sinners; if it is true that He rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," then the discussion of such questions as "forensic justification," "fourfold justification," "the influence of psychology on the doctrine of justification," "the triple personality of Christ," "the nature of His death, and of the curse of the law borne by Him," "the meaning of salvation by blood," "the sensibility of God," "the creation of the pneuma," "complex origin of lives," "physical and spiritual germ life," and many others introduced into this argument, being, as they are, questions only capable of being understood by the wise and prudent, even if they are by them, can have no other effect than that of encumbering with a number of perplexing difficulties a subject which ought to be of the profoundest interest, and therefore intelligible to the humblest Christian. But even with respect to theologians and professed students of such subjects, if it is necessary for them to wait until something like a unanimity of opinion is arrived at respecting such

complicated questions before they can come to a conclusion as to what is the teaching of Christianity on the subject of future retribution, they will have to wander long in uncertainty and doubt. While agreeing, therefore, with Mr. White's general position, and fully recognising the power of portions of his argument, I can only regret that he has endeavoured to impart to it additional strength by reasonings of so questionable a character, and by treating as essential truths of Christianity principles respecting which the utmost diversity of opinion has prevailed in all ages of the Church, and still continues to prevail among students of revelation who are equally learned, able, pious, and earnest seekers after truth. On the subjects above referred to it will be impossible for ordinary Christian people to form an opinion as to the validity of his reasonings; yet these constitute the very class which stands in special need of enlightenment as to what is the teaching of the New Testament respecting future retribution, in contradistinction to the widespread popular theories respecting it; for it is among them that the most dangerous errors are most widely diffused.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE PREVIOUS ARGUMENTS.

IT now only remains that I should set before the reader a summary of the most important conclusions, and offer a few brief observations on the positions established in the preceding chapters.

I. The importance of the investigation is undeniable ; for to unbelievers and doubters the theories which we have been considering constitute one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of their acceptance of Christianity as the revelation of One whose attributes are justice and mercy, and the essence of whose moral being is love. No less must it be so to the heathen, when they are informed by the missionary that the *euāγγēλιον θεοῦ*, *i.e.* the message of good news from God to man\*—for this is the precise meaning which the words must have conveyed to every speaker of Greek who heard them—consigns the overwhelming majority of mankind, their ancestors and unconverted friends included, to an endless existence in never-ending torments. To the thoughtful Christian, when he endeavours to picture to himself the dread reality, it proves one of the severest trials of his faith ; and to

\* Our modern word “gospel” fails to convey to the speaker of English the idea which the word *euāγγēλιον* conveyed to the speaker of Greek. To the latter, the *eu* in *euāγγēλιον* necessarily conveyed the idea of something good, and the *āγγēλιον* of a message or news. Consequently *τὸ euāγγēλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ* means good news, either from or about God ; *τὸ euāγγēλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ* good news about Christ ; and *τὸ euāγγēλιον τῆς βασιλείας* good news about the kingdom of God. This is all lost in our modern English word “gospel.”

the ordinary professor of Christianity the belief in it is a mere dead faith barren of results, which for the most part he continues to believe by refusing to realise what the words "endless existence in never-ending torment" mean. The question therefore, whether that which is commonly designated "the doctrine of eternal damnation" is a portion—and if a portion it must be an essential portion—of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or whether it is a tradition of men which has been superadded to that gospel, is one which it is impossible for those who believe in Christianity as a Divine revelation to make the subject of too earnest an inquiry.

II. With respect to the theories which affirm that because God is infinite and man finite we can have no certain knowledge of the realities as they exist in God; and therefore that our conceptions of the Divine attributes, and even the affirmations which revelation makes respecting them, may differ from those realities—as, for example, that justice as an attribute of God may differ widely from what the conscience and moral sense which He has implanted in man pronounces to be just; we have proved them to be alike repugnant to reason and revelation. Consequently, when the Scriptures affirm that God will judge the world in righteousness, they can only mean that He will do so in conformity with what our conscience and moral sense affirm to be righteous and just, and not in conformity with some standard of justice which may differ widely from it. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of the bearing of this principle on the question of future retribution.

III. The great truth that a time is coming when God will judge the world in righteousness, and render to every man according to his deeds, is definitely affirmed in the Scriptures of the New Testament; and although those of the Old are silent as to a judgment awaiting man beyond the grave, when they speak directly of the divine character and perfec-

tions they uniformly ascribe to God the attributes of justice, holiness, and mercy. Yet there are numerous utterances, nay, commandments, in these older Scriptures which fail to commend themselves to the enlightened conscience as either good, merciful, or holy, the imperfection of which was even recognised by its more enlightened prophets, and which stand in striking contrast to the teaching of our Lord. Further, I have shown that these Scriptures contain the records of a number of progressive revelations which were accommodated to the imperfect moral condition of those for whose use they were intended ; that they are, in a word, the record of the mode which was adopted by God in the education of the Jewish people, whereby they were gradually elevated from that state of degradation, which is the natural result of a long-continued period of slavery, to more worthy conceptions of religion and morality, such as would qualify them to become the heralds of Christianity to mankind. Consequently, inasmuch as those Scriptures are entirely silent respecting a judgment beyond the grave, and are strictly limited to dealing with a particular nation in its temporal capacity, the utterances of which I am speaking have no bearing on the principles on which God will judge individuals hereafter. They relate solely to the present moral government of the world, which, as far as it comes within our view, is confessedly an imperfect one, and therefore are wholly inapplicable to that judgment in which its inequalities will be rectified by rendering to every man according to his works.

IV. With respect to the question whether we have grounds for believing, independently of the express affirmations of a revelation, that man will survive the stroke of death, and that his conduct in this world will exert a most important influence on his condition hereafter, I have proved that it is one which lies outside the range of scientific investigation, and that while there is no evidence which is strictly scientific that man

will survive the death of the body, science is equally impotent to prove the contrary. Equally valueless, also, are all metaphysical arguments on this subject, owing to the fact that we know nothing whatever respecting the ontology of man. On the other hand, reason furnishes strong grounds for believing, on the assumption that a God exists, who is all-powerful and all-wise, that such survival is in the highest degree probable; and on the further assumption that He is the moral governor of the world, renders such survival a moral certainty.

I have also drawn the reader's attention to the fact that two questions which ought to be kept entirely distinct, have been habitually confounded together in this controversy. One of these is, Have we reason for believing that man will survive the dissolution of the body? the other, Will that survival be of endless duration? This is an important distinction; for while there may be abundant evidence to prove the one, it may be far from sufficient to prove the other; whereas it has been commonly taken for granted that those arguments which prove survival also prove that that survival will be of endless duration. On the contrary, all that reason can positively affirm is, that if there is a God who is the moral governor of the universe, man will continue to exist long enough to enable the Divine government to receive its vindication as a righteous government by the correction of its present inequalities, and by the righteous being rewarded and the wicked punished according to their deeds. It is commonly assumed if man survives the stroke of death that he must survive for ever; but this is by no means a necessary consequence. For other causes, *e.g.* the disease of moral evil wilfully persisted in, for aught we know to the contrary, may be capable of destroying man as a personal conscious being. No being that has been brought into existence by the will of another can have endless existence *inherent in itself*. Of One only, whose being has had no

beginning, can it be said with truth that His existence must be everlasting. Inasmuch, therefore, as man is destitute of self-existence, the length of the period during which he will continue to exist must be dependent on the good pleasure of Him who by His all-powerful energy maintains him in being every moment. Unless, therefore, it is the pleasure of Him who is as merciful as He is just, and who is as just as He is merciful, to keep such beings in existence, in order that they may expiate their past sins by sufferings which will have no limits as to their duration, these evil beings will cease to exist whenever it pleases the all-merciful to cease to exert that energy which alone maintains in existence both the evil and the good. It has been necessary to draw attention to this particular point because the doctrine of the inherent immortality of the soul, as it is commonly understood, is supposed to carry along with it, as a necessary consequence, that evil spirits and evil men must continue to exist for ever in torments which will never terminate.

V. However we may regard the imperfection of the light which the Scriptures of the Old Testament throw on the condition of man after death, yet its imperfection is a fact the truth of which it is impossible to deny. The following points respecting those Scriptures are proved in Chapter V. :—

1. With two exceptions (and these occur in books of a very late date), they contain no direct affirmation that a judgment awaits man beyond the grave, in which the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished according to their deeds.

2. While some of the more eminent Old Testament saints entertained a strong hope of a happy existence with God after death, yet others considered that the light of God's countenance was only to be enjoyed during the present life, and that the underworld was a region of darkness and of gloom. In this gloomy view of the condition of man after

death, as far as his survival was believed in, the popular mind fully concurred.

3. The prophets, though most earnest preachers of righteousness, and although they habitually urged on their hearers the consequences with which persistent sin will be attended in this life, never appealed to the terrors of a judgment to come as a deterrent from sin ; nor did they urge on the righteous, as a support under their present trials and sufferings, the belief in a state of existence beyond the grave in which the inequalities of present providences would be redressed. Whatever their opinions on these subjects may have been, it is a certain fact that their exhortations were based on purely temporal considerations. The same is equally true of the sanctions on which the Mosaic legislation rested. Yet the Book of Psalms, of Job, and several of the prophetic writings, make it certain that the inequalities of present providences proved to holy men of old a severe trial of their faith.

VI. The Christian Scriptures make the following definite affirmations respecting the condition of man after death :—

1. That our conscious personality will survive the death of our bodies.
2. That we shall be held responsible hereafter for our conduct here.
3. That at some period of the future our personality will once more manifest itself in some form of bodily, *i.e.* material organisation.
4. That with the exception of a few passages which speak of the condition of the departed saint as one of happiness, rest, and peace, the New Testament preserves an almost total silence respecting the condition of man between death and the resurrection ; and it is to a future judgment, in connection with a resurrection, that the hopes of the holy and the fears of sinners are specially directed.

5. That its affirmations and warnings respecting future retribution are made with a direct reference to Christ's Messianic kingdom, and to His future coming, for the purpose of realising its ideal. In one passage only is a direct reference made to that period of endless duration which will succeed His delivering up of this kingdom to the Father, when, as the Apostle affirms, God will be all in all. With respect to anything beyond this its silence is complete.

6. One further point is worthy of particular attention in connection with the subject we are considering, and it is undoubtedly a remarkable one. In appealing to men's hopes and fears, the writers of the New Testament do not rest their appeal on what is commonly called "the doctrine of the immortality of the soul," but on a future resurrection, which is to take place at the coming of our Lord in triumphant glory. It is then, they affirm, that God will render to every man according to his works.

VII. The revelation of the Divine character and perfections, as they are set forth in the Scriptures of the New Testament, with which revelation the voice of reason is in strict accord, renders it certain that God will hold men responsible hereafter only for what in them has been self-caused, and not for that in the causation of which they have been passive agents. Consequently He will not hold men responsible—

1. For the evil in them which has been transmitted to them from their ancestors.
2. For the evil in them which is the result of the environment in which they have been born and educated.
3. For not having embraced a gospel of which they have either not heard, or of which they have only heard an imperfect, perhaps a distorted, version.
4. For not having lived up to a light which they have never enjoyed.

5. Also in cases of mixed responsibility, which are very numerous, God's omniscience will enable Him clearly to discriminate between that in a man for which he has been, and that in him for which he has not been responsible, and will only hold him accountable for that in the production of which he has been a voluntary agent.

6. The righteous Judge of all the earth will not only judge men in conformity with His attribute of justice, but also in conformity with that of mercy ; or, according to a scriptural expression, " Mercy rejoiceth against judgment ;" i.e. when justice has spoken mercy will plead.

7. As far, therefore, as popular theories respecting retribution conflict with these principles, they are opposed alike to the affirmations of reason and revelation.

VIII. With respect to the account of the creation and fall of man, as narrated in the second and third chapters of Genesis, we have established the following positions :—

1. The narrative of the fall is not once referred to in the subsequent writings of the Old Testament ; nor is it directly referred to by our Lord in the whole course of His teaching, nor affirmed by Him to have been that which rendered His mission necessary ; and that it is only directly referred to in five out of the twenty-three remaining writings which compose the New Testament, and even then not for the purpose of erecting Christianity on it as a foundation.

2. A vast number of those dogmas which, according to the affirmations of systematic and popular theology, rest on this doctrine as a foundation, must be first read into the narrative before even a hint of them can be found therein ; and this is equally true, whether the narrative is viewed as a history of actual occurrences or as an allegory.

3. It is impossible to base on it any theory as to the condition in which man was originally created ; for while the

first narrative of creation affirms that he was made in the image of God, the second strongly suggests, though it does not affirm, that the moral and spiritual condition in which he was created was one of considerable imperfection ; inasmuch as it represents both Adam and Eve as capable of being easily seduced by a slight temptation to disobey what they knew to be the express command of their Maker, and that the life to which Adam was destined, if he had continued in his original condition, would have been that of a cultivator of a fertile garden which yielded him sustenance and pleasure with little labour. Such a kind of life is certainly not one which suggests the idea of either high intellectual, moral, or spiritual elevation.

4. Equally imperfect are the materials furnished by either of the two narratives to enable us to arrive at any certain conclusion whether man, as he was originally created, was subject to the law of death, in the same manner as the other animal races ; and if he was so created, whether death would have been the extinction of his being, as it is commonly supposed to be of theirs. The first narrative, which affirms that he was created in the image of God, favours the idea that he was created not subject to the law of animal mortality ; but the second more than implies that his exemption from death would not have been due to anything which was naturally inherent in him, but that it would be the result of his eating of the fruit of the tree of life.

5. The narrative contains no hint that the death threatened as the penalty of violating the Divine command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was intended to convey to Adam the idea either of what is designated *spiritual death*, or of a never-ending existence in torment ; still less that he would entail this terrible doom on his innumerable posterity, or that his sin would be imputed to them. These and various other theories which have been

propounded by theologians find no place in the narrative we are considering.

6. The strongest affirmation which can be found in the New Testament, as to the effects which have resulted to the human race in virtue of their descent from Adam, is contained in the two following passages of St. Paul :—

“As through one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.” And, “As in the Adam all die, so also in the Christ shall all be made alive.”

Beyond these two affirmations it is silent as to the consequences which are alleged to have resulted to mankind from Adam’s transgression.

The general result, therefore, of an examination of this narrative is, that it furnishes no adequate data on which to erect a theory of future retribution.

IX. With respect to the meaning which the apostolic writers intended to convey by the terminology employed by them, we have arrived at the following most important conclusions :—

1. That the Greek in which the New Testament is written is Greek as it was spoken and understood in those places in which the Churches had been founded, for the use of whose members these different writings were intended.

2. That consequently the words employed by the apostolic writers are not used in a special or technical sense, such as they have subsequently acquired through the elaboration of systems of theology, but in the wide and popular sense which was attached to them by Greek-speaking people at the time when these writings were composed.

3. That the shortness of the time which elapsed between the composition of some of these writings and the foundation of the Churches to which they are addressed, and the constant influx into them of fresh bodies of Gentile converts,

must have proved an effectual barrier against the terminology employed respecting retribution acquiring a technical sense, during this brief interval of time, among the members of these different Churches, widely separated as they were from one another.

4. The writings of St. John form the sole exception to the use of language which is not purely popular, but the technical terms which he employs are extremely few. The most important ones used by him were such as were current in certain philosophical schools of thought at the time when the writings in question were composed, and as they were composed near the close of the first century, these terms had become more or less familiar to the members of the different Churches. Few of them, however, have an immediate bearing on the question of future retribution. Words in St. Paul's writings, which some mistake for technicalities, were rendered familiar to the ordinary speaker of Greek by being terms in common use in the administration of justice. These also, though they have an important bearing on the great question which was eagerly discussed when the Apostle wrote, viz. the obligation of Christians to observe the Mosaic law, have no direct reference to the question we are considering.

5. Such being the *usus loquendi* of the apostolic writers, it follows that the terminology employed by them respecting the retribution which will overtake the finally impenitent in the unseen world is not used in a technical sense conveying one single definite meaning, but in the wider and more indeterminate one which such terms bore in the mouth of an ordinary speaker of the Greek language, such as the English words, which in the Revised Version are given as the equivalents of the corresponding Greek ones, bear in ordinary conversational English.

6. It would have been impossible either for the early converts or for those Jewish or heathen auditaries which the

Christian missionaries were in the habit of addressing to have attached any other meaning to their language than that which was the popularly accepted one, unless some intimation had been given that the terms employed must be understood by the hearers not in their ordinary meaning but in some special, definite, and technical sense. Thus, to take an example, it was impossible that an ordinary speaker of Greek could have understood the word *øλεθρος*, destruction, to mean "endless existence in never-ending torment," unless some means had been adopted to inform him that the speaker or the writer attached this special meaning to the word in question, and uniformly used it to convey this very special and technical signification to the minds of those whom he was addressing.

7. None of the terms used by the Apostolic writers in speaking of the retribution which will overtake impenitent sinners in the unseen world, according to their natural signification, convey the idea that the punishment threatened was an endless existence in never-ending torment, nor do these writers drop any hint that they intended their readers to attach such a special and technical meaning to the words in question. In fact, to have used them in this sense, without even a hint that this was the thing intended, would have been to employ words in a sense which would have been both non-natural and misleading.

8. Respecting the meaning of the word *αιών*, I have proved that when it is used to denote duration it is incapable of expressing the idea of duration without limits, unless it is united with a particle of negation. When it is not thus united it expresses a period of indefinite but limited duration, such for example as an "age" or dispensation. An *αιών*, therefore, may be a short or a prolonged period of time. In this, its indefiniteness, it differs from our modern terms by which we express the idea of duration, which are all definite; nor can the idea of absence of limits be forced into

them by any process of multiplication. Thus a year or a century is an unmistakably definite period of time; and although millions of millions of years is an idea the vastness of which our minds find it difficult to grasp, yet we know that a period must arrive when they will be exhausted, but that then what we designate endless duration will be no nearer its termination than when they first began. This is equally true of the words *aiώνες*, and *aiώνες τῶν αἰώνων*, the multiples of *aiών*, and also of the word *aiώνιος*, which merely expresses their adjective meaning. *Aiών* may therefore denote a period comparatively short, such as "this present evil age;" and its multiples, such as *aiώνες αἰώνων*, *i.e.* ages of ages, that of one indefinitely vast, yet of limited duration. The truth is, the vista of the apostolic writers respecting the future was confined to the period of the Messianic reign. This being so, the various terms which the writers of the New Testament use as expressions of duration are not intended to denote the philosophical idea of endlessness, but protracted periods of time indefinitely long. Still, a time must come when, whether they be thousands, hundreds of thousands, or hundreds of millions of years, the ages, or the ages of ages, they will be exhausted; and however long may be the interval before the work of redemption is finally accomplished, and the Son will resign the kingdom to the Father, that which we designate *eternity*, or *a duration without limits*, *i.e.* *endlessness*, must lie beyond it; but into this the vision of the apostolic writers did not penetrate, it being confined to the *aiώνιος βασιλεία*, that is, "the age-long kingdom" of our Lord Jesus Christ, age-long in this connection being a term exactly equivalent in meaning to the Greek *aiώνιος*.

X. I have devoted three chapters of considerable length to the careful examination of the specific affirmations of the writers of the New Testament respecting retribution. These are far too numerous to render it possible to set before the

reader, in a brief summary, the conclusions resulting from them all. I can, however, place before him in a single sentence the general result of the investigation. While they are unanimous in affirming that God will render to every man hereafter according to his works, to the righteous according to his righteousness, and to the wicked according to his sin, they not only make no direct affirmation that the punishment of evil men will be of endless duration, but the terms which they use to denote that punishment, in the ordinary sense which they bear in the Greek language, negative the idea of endlessness. From this a further conclusion follows: inasmuch as a time will come at some period of the future, when "God will be all in all," it is a necessary consequence that evil beings will then have ceased to exist in the universe of God, and this result can only be brought about in two ways, either by their conversion or by their destruction.

XI. This conclusion brings us face to face with two questions of the deepest interest, namely, Is there reason for believing that a probation will be afforded beyond the grave to those innumerable multitudes of mankind whose probation here has been passed under unfavourable conditions? Will those who have never once had an opportunity of embracing the gospel here, or who have only had set before them some inadequate or distorted version of it, have an opportunity afforded them of embracing it hereafter? Or, to put the question at issue in a slightly altered form, will those who die in a condition not lost to all good have an opportunity afforded them for repentance and amendment, and those who die imperfect in holiness for a growth in holiness, in the unseen world?

To these questions only one writer in the New Testament gives an answer which is definite and distinct. I have shown that St. Peter affirms in two passages of his Epistle—unless

for the purpose of evading the natural meaning of his language we put on it a most strained interpretation—that such an opportunity has been afforded to a portion of the human race, viz. to the disobedient antediluvians who perished in the flood, and that Jesus Christ proclaimed to them “good tidings” between His death and resurrection ; and also that, although the Apostle mentions the antediluvians alone, the inference is irresistible that men who have lived and died under equally unfavourable conditions will be similarly favoured. But while St. Peter is the only writer in the New Testament who makes an express affirmation on this subject, I have further shown that the same inference follows as a necessary consequence from the character of God as it is revealed in the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ, and that the appeal of those who have lived and died under the unfavourable conditions referred to in former chapters cannot but come up with acceptance before Him by whom God will judge the world in righteousness, who is as merciful as He is just, and who came to give His life for the life of the world.

XII. To the same conclusion those considerations point on which the theory of universalism is based, and also those numerous passages of Scripture which I have adduced in the last chapter which affirm the all-embracing efficacy of Christ’s redeeming work, and the ultimate and final triumph of good over evil through Him. Is it possible, I ask, to read these and believe that the final result of redemption will be the salvation of only a small portion of the human race, and the consigning of multitudes, so numerous as to transcend our powers of definite conception, either to an existence in misery which will never end, or to ultimate annihilation ? So strong are these declarations that, as I have observed, if they stood unqualified by other declarations of our Lord and His Apostles, which in their natural meaning affirm the destruction of the finally

impenitent, they would go far, very far, to suggest, if they would not absolutely prove, that the result of Christ's redeeming work will be the ultimate recovery of every evil being to holiness and to God. But, as it is an unquestionable fact that the overwhelming majority of mankind have both lived and died in a condition either of positive unholiness or in one of very imperfect holiness, it follows, unless these Scriptures make unmeaning affirmations, and unless the Divine attributes of justice, holiness, mercy, and love differ widely from our human conceptions of these qualities, that a state of things must await man beyond the grave in which those whose probation here has been passed under unfavourable conditions will enter on one hereafter where the conditions will be favourable; in which those who have had no opportunity afforded them of embracing the gospel here will have one afforded them of doing so in the unseen world; in which those who die in a condition in which all good in them is not utterly extinct may be capable of recovery to holiness; and in which those who die imperfect in holiness may have the opportunity afforded them of growing "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Such are our general conclusions.

It will doubtless be urged as a fatal objection to the chief positions maintained in this work that the doctrine of the everlasting damnation of the wicked—*i.e.* their endless existence in never-ending torment—has received so wide an acceptance in the Christian Church as to render it one of its catholic doctrines, and that this acceptance has been so wide and general as fully to realise the maxim, "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus;" that is to say, what all Christians have always everywhere believed must constitute an essential truth of Christianity, and consequently the truth of this doctrine is so placed beyond dispute as to render all further inquiry into it useless.

To this I answer, that this much-vaunted rule for determining what constitutes an essential Christian truth is little better than a pyramid erected on its apex. It may be theoretically correct to say that what all men always everywhere have believed must be true, or that what all Christians always everywhere have believed to constitute an essential truth of Christianity must be one of its essential truths. Whether this be so or not, it will be unnecessary to discuss here; for the moment we attempt to give this rule a practical application it vanishes into thin air as a test of truth, for the very simple reason that we have no possible means of ascertaining either what all men or what all Christians have always everywhere believed. If, on the other hand, we interpret the rule in question into meaning only what the majority have believed, it requires no proof that such beliefs are very uncertain tests of truth. If, however, it be alleged that all that the maxim means is, that whatever doctrine has been accepted by what is designated the Catholic Church must constitute so essential a truth of Christianity as to render superfluous all further investigation into its claims to be accepted as such, we then become involved in the following very difficult questions, viz. what constitutes universal acceptance by the Catholic Church? through what medium is its voice heard? and how is this universal acceptance to be proved during the long ages of the past? So complicated is the mass of matter which must be carefully investigated before it is possible to arrive at anything approaching to certainty on such subjects, that it will be long, indeed, before we can determine what are and what are not essential truths of Christianity, if this is the only mode by which the validity of such truths must be determined. Any further discussion of this question, however, is superfluous; for whether such rules are valid or invalid for the purposes for which they have been

put forward, it is a matter of absolute certainty that in all ages of the Christian Church, as far as our historical evidence extends, there have been eminent theologians who have been unable to accept as a Christian verity the commonly accepted doctrine known by the name of eternal damnation. This being so, the affirmation that it is a doctrine which has been accepted always everywhere by the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ is untrue, and therefore the theory which has been erected on the assumption of its truth is invalid.

But the extensive acceptance of a particular position by the Church, as true, is very far from constituting any adequate reason for believing that it must be so. As I have above remarked, the evidence is wholly wanting that any except those very simple truths on which Christianity is based, and the denial of the truth of which would completely nullify it, have received the universal assent of the entire Christian Church. On the contrary, there are several positions which, as far as our evidence goes, have made a very near approach to receiving such assent at different periods of the Church's history, which are now recognised as untrue. Of these a few instances will suffice. Once it was an all but universal belief, if not an actually universal one, that the sun moved round the earth, and that to affirm the motion of the latter was a most flagrant denial of the truth of Scripture; and when those appeared who openly controverted the truth of this belief, the position taken by them was pronounced a heresy. So it was with the belief that there are antipodes. Up to our own day, the belief that the world was created in six natural days had a far stronger claim to be a catholic belief than an overwhelming majority of the dogmas in behalf of which such a claim has been asserted; and the idea that animal and vegetable life had existed on the globe for hundreds of thousands of years, would have been pronounced one of the most dangerous of heresies. It would be easy to enumerate many

other positions which have received an equally wide acceptance, and which modern investigations have shown to be utterly untrue. But to come to dogmas which are more avowedly Christian. It is impossible to read the New Testament, and attach to language its natural meaning, without arriving at the conclusion that the belief that the personal coming of Christ was then actually imminent, or at any rate an event not very remote, was an all but, if not an actually, universal belief of the apostolic Church; yet time has proved that that belief was founded on a mistake. Not to mention others, two beliefs may establish a far stronger claim to universality than that which affirms that the ultimate fate of those who die in an unholy state will be a never-ending existence in never-ending torment. I allude to the widespread belief, in the early Church, which was accepted as true by a majority of its most eminent doctors and teachers, that the atonement was a sacrifice offered to the devil; and to the still more widespread and fatal belief, which has been sanctioned by the highest authorities of the Church and State during not less than fourteen hundred years, that persecution is a lawful instrument to employ in the defence of Christianity, the suppression of so-called heresy, and in the propagation of the faith. With these instances before us, it is absurd to invoke the wide acceptance of this doctrine as a bar to our summoning it to answer for its truth at the tribunal of reason and revelation.

I will conclude with a citation from the work of one, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the Churches, as to the possibility of the discovery of truths hitherto overlooked in the records of revelation and the mode in which such investigations must be conducted to render them fruitful of results:—

“And as it is owned the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood; so, if it ever comes to be understood, before

the *restitution* of all things, and without miraculous interpositions ; it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at : by the continuance and progress of learning and of liberty ; and by particular persons attending to, comparing and pursuing, intimations scattered up and down it, which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. For this is the way, in which all improvements are made ; by thoughtful men's tracing on obscure hints, as it were, dropped us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance. Nor is it at all incredible, that a book, which has so long been in the possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered. For all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in possession of mankind several thousand years before. And possibly it might be intended, that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture." (Butler's Analogy, Part II. Chap. III.)

A period of a century and a half will very shortly have elapsed since this very remarkable passage was written by this most profound thinker. When he wrote it physical science was in its early youth ; the critical and historical sciences, if then born, were in their infancy. Since then these, especially the former, have thrown an illumination on the realities of things which may be said to amount to a revelation, communicated, to adopt the bishop's language, "without miraculous interpositions." This illumination has reflected an amount of light on the Bible, its historical character, and on its interpretation, such as the student has never enjoyed before. Pre-eminently worthy, therefore, of the deepest attention of the Christian student, are the concluding words of the above quotation: "Nor is it at all incredible, that a book, which has so long been in the possession

of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered. For, all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and the last age," —and we may justly add to the bishop's words, in the present age—"were equally in possession of mankind several thousand years before. *And possibly it might be intended, that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture.*"

Such, then, were the views entertained by this profound thinker, greatly lauded, it is true, by all parties in the Church, but some of whose most important positions not a few of these parties have deemed it expedient to ignore.

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